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HARKAWAY AND THE BRIGANDS.

CHAPTER I.

KEMP AND HUNSTON.

When Kemp left Oxford, he cut across the country
by paths with which he was evidently familiar.
Before evening fell he reached the old sand-pit.

One was singing, others playing at cards, another
working in a corner with a pile of bricks, a trowel, and
some mortar, while Hunston sat alone on the top of a
cask, smoking a short pipe, and gave himself up to
reflection.

On the entrance of the intruder the men sprang up
with fierce oaths, and several revolvers were leveled at
his head.

"Fools!" said Kemp, "don't you know me?"

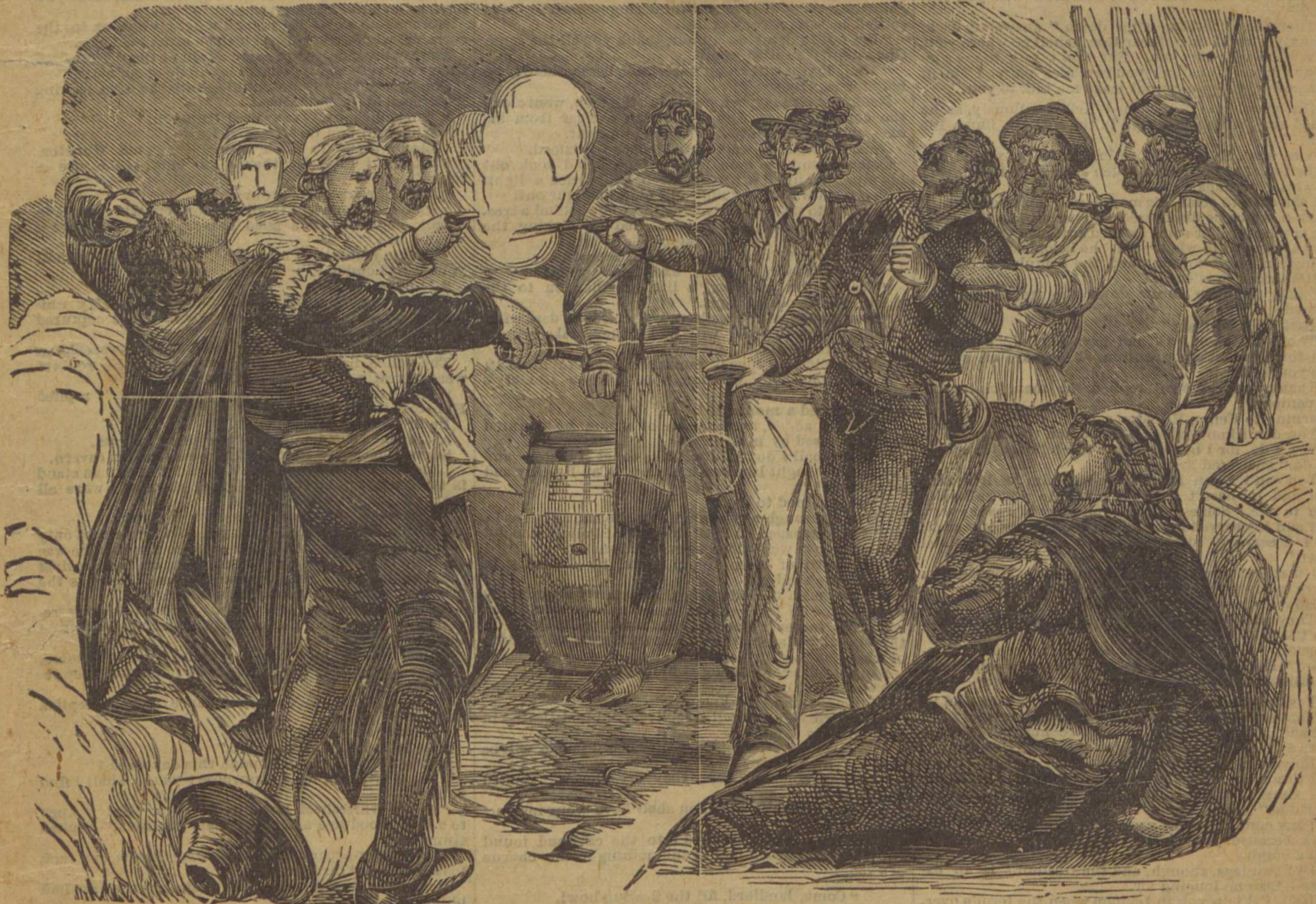
"So you have got Harkaway here?" Kemp went
on.

"How the deuce do you know?" asked Hunston.

"His disappearance is pretty well known in Ox-
ford by this time, thanks to the meddling of Sir Syd-
ney Dawson and a new acquaintance of his called
O'Rafferty."

"Do you suspect anything?"

"That's just what I came to warn you about. The-



Jack instantly leveled his weapon at the brigand chief and fired.

Descending its rugged sides, he came to the entrance
to the cave, where a sentinel ought to have been posted,
but no one was about.

Sounds of revelry came from the interior, and a man's
voice was heard singing a wine song.

"Let the goblet pass,

And we'll drink another glass,

To the maids of merry, merry England."

Kemp passed boldly along the passage and entered
the common apartment, where the band were enjoying
themselves.

The pistols were as quickly lowered as they had been
raised.

"A nice watch you keep, and a jolly row you
kick up to attract notice from the outside," replied
Kemp.

"The beggars are getting careless," cried Hunston.
"Here you fellow, you Laugh-at-Death, go and keep
guard."

A tall, thick-set, hang-dog looking man, who had ac-
quired this nickname through his reckless courage,
sullenly quitted the card party, and shouldering a rifle
went to the door.

"I have been to the superintendent of police," replied
Kemp.

"Manisty?"

"That's the man, and I fancy he has his suspicions.
O'Rafferty was with him yesterday, when you collared
him, and he missed him just hereabouts."

"Oh," said Hunston, anxiously; "so you think
Manisty has some clew to the cave?"

"I do; and you ought to lose no time in clearing
out. What have you done with Harkaway?"

"He is saying his prayers inside there," answered
Hunston, carelessly pointing to his dungeon.

"What is that man doing?"

"Bricking him up; that's all."

"Eh?"

Kemp did not quite catch his meaning.

"You know I hate the fellow so internally that I invented a death for him—something slow and lingering. Shooting or knocking on the head was too good for him, so I thought of the dodge they used to have in convents with refractory monks or nuns, and I am having him shut in the inside dungeon by means of a brick wall."

"It is not safe. Why not kill him out of the way when you have the chance?"

"Isn't it safe? I'll bet you a sovereign it's the safest thing out. Suppose the police come here. Will they ever find him? Not they; and see how he'll suffer."

"There is something in that," answered Kemp, walking towards the man who was at work.

"What's your game now?" asked Hunston.

"I want to have a look at him, that's all. It will do me good just to insult him."

Harkaway was lying huddled up in a corner, and there was a hole left in the newly-made wall, which just enabled his enemy to peep in at him.

"How do you find yourself, my pippin?" Kemp was bold enough to say in a coarse manner.

The sight of Kemp revived Jack's drooping energies for a moment.

"I wouldn't change places with you," he answered.

"You wouldn't? Then you'd be a flat. If you had the chance, why wouldn't you?"

"Because I'm not a cowardly, lying, sneaking thief," replied Jack, boldly, "and even in this fix, I can look back on my past life with more satisfaction than you ever will be able to do."

"That's all kid," said Kemp, a little abashed.

"Is it kid?" cried Jack. "Wait till you know that you've got to die, and see if you'll be as brave as I am. I've got a clear conscience, and can die without funk-ing, while you would be howling and begging for mercy."

"You've got a very good cheek for a man in your position," replied Kemp. "But I believe it is put on; you will be hungry and thirsty, and want a little air, as soon as the last brick is put in. How will you feel then?"

"There is something after death," answered Jack, solemnly, "and I do not fear that I shall go where your evil actions will take you. But don't talk to me; go to your friend Hunston: you're a nice pair. I am in your power, yet you cannot make me talk to you."

"Die, you brute!" returned Kemp, callously, as he turned away and made a sign to the man to finish his work.

There was only a few more bricks to be placed one on the top of the other, and then Jack was hidden from the world, perhaps forever.

In the days to come, his mouldering bones or ghostly skeleton might be discovered, and serve for the occasion of a lecture for some learned antiquary, who would make a guess as to what "era" he belonged to.

Hunston and Kemp watched the completion of that horrible work in silence.

At last the man threw down the trowel, and exclaimed:

"Last brick's in, sir."

"That's all right. Go and have a drink," answered Hunston; "what's your lotion. There are all sorts; help yourself."

"Thank you, captain," replied the man, joining his companions.

Turning to Kemp, Hunston said:

"You don't know what a satisfaction this is to me."

"Yes, I do, for I believe I hate the fellow as much as you do," answered Kemp.

"You can't. You haven't known him as long as I have, and he hasn't done so much to you as he has done to me. Some people would say it was my own fault and I deserved it. All rot; look at my one arm; did I deserve to lose the other? Look at my ruined career."

"I shall get the insurance on his life. I made him insure in my favor, you know," remarked Kemp.

"How can you prove his death?"

"They will have to pay for it if he can't be found, won't they?"

"Query! I'm not so sure about that," replied Hunston. "However, if you get nothing, you will have the satisfaction of knowing he is out of the way."

"Yes, but there is little Emily who won't be glad."

"That's true, too, because she won't have me for a husband, and I have no chance there now, for I shall get away from Oxford to-morrow," replied Hunston.

"Do you mean to go to London?"

"I think so. Now you say Manisty is on the scent, it is time to turn this life up. I don't want penal servitude."

"They couldn't make you pick oakum or turn the crank, because you've only one arm," replied Kemp, with a laugh.

"I've two legs, though, and the treadmill is an exercise I have no longing for."

"Well, I'll join you in London when the term's over. We both have a little money by us, and we will start in some line or other," said Kemp.

"Shan't you take a degree?"

"Not I. I have never been a reading man. No one likes me at the university; all fight shy of me, and I shall cut it. The turf is my game. I can make money at that."

"Well," said Hunston, "we got a tidy pile out of the bank robbery. By the way, how do you get on with the porter?"

"He keeps worrying me for money, and threatens he will split if I don't part, hang him."

"Does he want much?"

"No; only quids; but he's always at it. He had five pounds last week."

"Keep him in tow till you leave. It won't do to be shown up," answered Hunston. "Of course he's no use now, because your idea was to accuse Harkaway of the robbery."

"Exactly; and get him committed for trial on the porter's evidence and some circumstantial proof."

"I understand. It was not a bad plant, though it is useless since we have trapped our fox and settled him out of the way. Have something to drink?"

"No, I'm off; and if you'll take my advice, you will disband your gang and step it at once."

"Not I," said Hunston; "I mean to have a spree to-night, and get blind drunk. To-morrow afternoon we will clear out, and you shall have a line from me when I am in London. Stop and make a night of it. Let the bottle pass; and we'll drink another glass to"—

"No, no," interrupted Kemp. "I'm off, I tell you. There is nothing more to talk about. Remember I have warned you, and if anything happens, it is your fault."

"Who's afraid?" replied Hunston, drinking a tumbler full of spirits and water.

"It is useful to be afraid sometimes. I don't believe in your dare-devil sort of courage."

"Because you never had any," remarked Hunston, refilling his pipe.

"If you are going to be nasty, the sooner I go the better," said Kemp, rising.

"I'm all right. Sit down, I tell you."

"Oh, I know you," said Kemp. "When you get in one of your obstinate, disagreeable moods, I'd as soon stop with Old Nick as yourself."

"I believe I'm a sort of relation of the gentleman's," replied Hunston, whose hollow, gaunt face lighted up with the ghost of a smile.

"You will join him some of these fine days. He's got a tight hold on you," said Kemp.

"There is one comfort, you'll be there too."

"Don't talk about such things. I've got to walk home in the dark, through a lonely country, and I shall see devils black and devils blue in every hedge. Shut up."

"Have some brandy. It will steady your nerves," said Hunston. "Do, there's a good fellow. It will put you as right as a ninepence. Join me. I'm bound to get drunk to-night; I'm so thundering pleased to have settled Jack Harkaway at last."

"I'm not in drinking humor, thank you all the same Good-night," replied Kemp.

"Well, if you will be an unsociable beast, there is no help for it. By-by."

Kemp shook his head, nodded to the men, went along the corridor, gave Laugh-at-Death a cigar from his case, and urged him to keep a good lookout.

Then he began to walk rapidly back to Oxford.

Before Kemp had gone far, he stopped and took out his pipe, and filled it with tobacco, and struck a light.

The wind was rather high and blew his light out.

In order to protect the match, he went behind a tree. Suddenly, just as he had succeeded in making the tobacco burn, he heard footsteps.

Naturally cautious, Kemp did not move.

"This is the way, I think," exclaimed a voice.

"Yes," replied another, "a little farther on to the right, lies the old sand-pit."

"Step along gently; we have wary birds to deal with, and the slightest noise will make them take wing," said the first speaker.

"The police, by Jove!" remarked Kemp to himself; "and a strong body of them, too. I know Manisty's voice."

He reflected a moment.

Then he added, as the men, of whom he counted twelve, passed by him.

"What shall I do? I don't like to let Hunston and his pals be caught like rats in a trap. Can I get by and warn them?"

He determined to try.

Getting through a gap in a hedge, he ran as fast as he could and managed to head the Oxford Police, who did not hurry but went along slowly and surely.

Once ahead of them, Kemp found no difficulty in gaining the sand-pit.

He descended the side with the dexterity acquired by practice, for he had been in constant communication with Hunston ever since he had taken up his abode in this singular place with the desperate gang of ruffians of whom he was the captain.

Laugh-at-Death challenged him.

"Who goes there?"

"Friend," answered Kemp.

"Pass, friend, all's well," replied Laugh-at-Death, in true military fashion.

"Be careful," said Kemp; "the Oxford police will be here in ten minutes."

"If they come in here, they are clever," replied Laugh-at-Death.

"Look out, that's all. You shall have your instructions directly."

Kemp, saying this, hurried into the cave and found Hunston, more than half drunk, joining in the chorus of a song:

"Come, landlord, fill the flowing bowl,

Until it does run over,

For to-night we'll merry be,

For to-night we'll merry be,

To-morrow we'll be sober."

He roared out.

Seeing Kemp, he exclaimed:

"Hallo, my beauty. Come back have you? That's right; I knew you'd think better of it. Join in the chorus; a song's nothing without the coal-box—chorus I mean."

"Come, landlord, fill the flowing bowl,

Until it"—

"Are you mad?" interrupted Kemp.

"Why?"

"The Oxford police are upon you."

Instantly there was a dead silence.

Every man sprang to his feet and grasped the nearest weapon, while the faces of all turned pale with the anxiety and apprehension they could not conceal.

"The police, did you say?" demanded Hunston, choking back a hiccup.

"Yes."

"Is Manisty with them?"

"He is; I met them on the road, and turned back to warn you."

In a moment Hunston was cool and collected.

His drunkenness might have been assumed, but it passed off.

"Tell Laugh-at-Death," he exclaimed, "to shoot the first man that shows his face near the cave's mouth."

A man went away to deliver the order.

"Well, I'm off," said Kemp. "I've done all I can for you. Good-bye, perhaps forever."

"Don't leave me in the lurch," replied Hunston.

"My escape will be cut off directly."

"No it won't. Come here," Hunston continued.

Lowering his voice, he added: "The men will fight better if you stop. I want them to get killed; I shall be best without them, because if they are dead, they can't split, can they?"

"How are we to get out of it?" asked Kemp.

"I have a private staircase—it is a secret to all of them—that leads out to the top of the pit; you and I can make our way out by it, when it gets too hot."

Kemp hesitated.

It is an old saying, that a man or woman who loses tates is lost.

If he had gone away without any further talking he would have been safe.

But a shot was heard.

This was followed by another and another.

"Laugh-at-Death is at work," replied Hunston.

"Keep near me."

He retreated to the end of the cave, and Kemp followed him.

Suddenly Laugh-at-Death ran into the cavern.

"How many are there of them?" asked Hunston.

"A dozen or more," replied Laugh-at-Death. "I've settled one or two; but it's getting too warm, when you have to stand before an army."

More shots were heard, and a fight went on in the corridor, wherein the band made a strong defense.

The robbers, however, were afraid of the police; fired their revolvers at random, doing little or no harm.

One by one they came running into the cave, looking frightened and demoralized.

"The game's up," answered Hunston.

"What will you do?" asked Kemp.

"Leave them to their fate," answered Hunston. "What do I care for them? I only made use of them."

"But your treasure—your gold?"

"I have transmitted it all to London, where it is in a bank deposited in a false name. Still I can get it when I like."

"That is just what I have done," said Kemp. "Shall you go to London?"

"At once."

"I have a good mind to accompany you. My university career is over if any of your men are captured and blow the gaff on me."

A shot whizz

being brought back, sullen and downcast, carefully handcuffed and guarded.

"Mates," he exclaimed, "on'tder abbler. Eepker akder the oveker in the aultver."

Manisty's quick ear caught the sentence.

"What can he mean?"

He was puzzled.

CHAPTER II.

A TIMELY RESCUE.

AYTER a moment's reflection, Manisty told off the men to take the prisoners to the jail at Oxford.

One he sent for a surgeon to attend the wounded, whose hurts he himself bandaged up as well as he could with such materials as were at hand.

An hour elapsed before the doctor arrived.

During this time, Manisty was occupied in writing a short account for the local papers of the capture of the robbers' stronghold.

It ran thus:

"CAPTURE OF THE BLACK BAND."

"Last night, Superintendent Manisty, of the Oxford constabulary, acting upon information he had received, proceeded with a picked body of men to an old sand-pit on Mr. Beal's estate.

"In a cavern formed in the stone, he found, as he had expected, the members of a desperate gang of robbers, known as the Black Band. They have committed numerous robberies in the city of Oxford, and in gentlemen's houses in the country. Even the crime of murder is suspected to have been committed by them. A sanguinary conflict took place between the police and the thieves, which resulted in the defeat of the latter. Some severe wounds were inflicted by pistol shots on both sides, but as yet no fatal case is reported. It is to be regretted that the captain of these miscreants has escaped. He is a one-armed man, and his name is supposed to be Hunston. Probably a reward will be offered for his apprehension, although the police believe they have a clew to his whereabouts. We will give further particulars in our next issue."

Having finished his brief account of the tragic affair, and modestly refraining from praising himself or his men for their valiant conduct, he again took up his pen.

He was writing on the top of the cask, on which Hunston had so lately been sitting, singing a Bacchanalian ditty.

Pen, ink, and paper he always carried with him in a portable case, so as to be ready for emergencies.

This time he headed his notes:

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MR. HARKAWAY OF ST. ALDATE'S.—We ought to inform our readers that at present nothing has been heard of Mr. Harkaway, though we are assured by Superintendent Manisty, that the missing gentleman is very likely to be found in a few hours."

These slips he sent off by a messenger to the *Oxford Times* office, so that the news might appear in the morning edition, which went on the machine at twelve o'clock that night.

It is remarkable, as an instance of the hard-heartedness of habitual thieves, that none of them said a word about Harkaway, who they all knew was left to die in the vault.

Their idea of honor would not allow them to "split," and as for the prisoner himself, they did not care a rush whether he lived or died.

When Manisty had attended to everything that his duty required, he dismissed all his men save one.

This man was named Thompson, and he was the most intelligent man in the force.

"I suppose," said Manisty, carelessly, "we might as well get home."

"No, sir," replied Thompson. "If you will allow me, I will stay behind."

"What for?"

"We have not searched the cave yet. There may be money there, and"—

He hesitated.

"Well," said Manisty, with a searching glance.

"I keep my ears open, sir, and have heard of Mr. Harkaway's disappearance. This Hunston, who is the captain of the band we have just put a settler on, is reported to be Mr. Harkaway's enemy."

"What then?"

"We may discover him or his body."

Manisty shook Thompson by the hand.

"You have guessed my thoughts exactly," he said; "they were running in the same direction. I selected you to remain with me because I know your worth, and I asked you questions just to try you. Come along; we will go back to the cave together."

"If we find Mr. Harkaway, sir," said Thompson, "we shall have done a good night's work."

It did not take them long to regain the cave, in which the lamps used by the robbers were still burning.

They commenced a minute inspection of the interior.

Their diligent search resulted in finding a quantity of plate, jewelry, and gold which had fallen to the robbers' share, and which not being so clever as their captain Hunston, they did not know how to dispose of.

The thieves had resorted to the old devices of hiding their plunder in holes in the rock.

When the policemen had completed their search, they sat down and regaled themselves with some ham, bread, and wine, which they found in a barrel.

This had served the robbers as a larder.

The secret passage was explored, but led to no new discovery.

"That's how Hunston escaped," remarked Manisty.

"No doubt," said Thompson.

"If we could have only collared him, what a prize he would have been."

"I believe he murdered the Jew Manasses, and robbed the house."

"So do I."

All at once a deep groan was heard.

"What is that?" asked Manisty, looking round him uneasily.

"Sounds like a human being," answered Thompson.

"Mr. Harkaway, for a million," cried Manisty. "Listen again. Be careful."

They waited five minutes, but the noise was not repeated.

"It came from this direction," said Thompson, going to the extremity of the cave.

Manisty followed him.

"Look here," exclaimed the superintendent, "the mortar is freshly laid. Do you see these bricks? There is something inside. This is the work of men's hands."

"Right, sir," replied Thompson. "I wish I had a crowbar."

"Use your feet. Let's batter this wall down. Go back, take a run, and at it with your right foot. I'm with you. So!"

They retraced, and charged the wall.

Their first effort was unsuccessful.

So was the second.

But the third made a breach in the newly-erected wall, and a heap of bricks fell inside.

"Bring a lamp—quick!" exclaimed the superintendent.

Thompson was not slow in obeying the order.

The light flashed through the aperture.

They beheld Jack, lying huddled up in a corner, exhausted from want of air, and fatigued by thirst and hunger.

"There he is," exclaimed Thompson. "Hurrah! we've found him."

"Get some water. There is some in that black jug," replied Manisty.

"Fancy the blackguards treating a gentleman like that," muttered Thompson, as he fetched the water.

"They are like all thieves—rank cowards," answered Manisty.

A few more kicks rendered the breach practicable, and the two men entered the vault.

"I guessed as much," said Thompson, "when I heard that villain Laugh-at-Death—who has given us more trouble than any rascal we ever had in the country—say—'Don't blab: let's keep the vault dark.'"

"I heard their slang," answered Manisty. "Lift his head up while I give him a drink, then we will carry him out into the air. Gently does it."

Some water was poured down Jack's throat, and it instantly revived him.

He was reduced to his last gasp.

It was the want of air more than anything else which had affected him, though of course, hunger and thirst had brought him very low.

Carrying him through the hole in the wall, they laid him down upon a bed of straw in the outer cave.

A current of fresh air fanned his face, and he rapidly came to himself.

The cords which bound him were cut, and the blood circulated freely, so that he was soon able to speak.

"Who are you?" he asked, looking strangely at Manisty.

"Oxford police, sir," replied the superintendent.

"Where is Hunston?"

"He has escaped I am sorry to say. But we have captured the rest of the band."

"And Kemp?"

"Kemp," said Manisty, tapping his forehead. "I do not know him."

"I suppose not," said Jack. "Do I owe my life to you?"

"Under Providence, sir," asked Thompson.

"I will show my gratitude as well as I can when I get back to Oxford. I thought it was all over with me, but, being an old campaigner, I waited for the off chance."

"Feel very weak, sir?" asked Thompson.

"That I do; and so would you if you had been treated as I have been."

"Think you could eat anything?"

"I'd have a good try at it, if I only had half a chance," replied Jack.

They set before him the ham and a cold fowl, which Thompson raked out of the larder, with some bread and beer.

Jack got up and ate like a horse.

Manisty told him of the hint O'Rafferty and Dawson had given him.

How he had successfully acted upon it and broken up the Black Band.

"By Jove!" said Jack, who was beginning to feel himself again, "you deserve a putty medal."

The superintendent laughed.

"I am, satisfied, sir," he said, "with having done my duty."

Jack drank another glass of beer, which in his exhausted state took effect upon him.

Going to the straw bed, he murmured:

"Think shall go to sleep now."

The next instant he fell into a profound slumber.

"The best thing he could do," said Manisty. "I shall go back to Oxford now. You stop here, Thompson, and come back with Mr. Harkaway when he wakes. Tell him I shall not say anything to the newspapers until I see him, because I do not know how he would like everything explained."

"Yes, sir," replied Thompson.

They shook hands, and the superintendent walked back to the city.

Jack's breathing was very heavy and stertorous, but he had eaten well, and there was little doubt that he would be all right when he awoke.

His life had been saved by a miracle.

Hunston and Kemp had been beaten once more, and

this time more severely than they had ever been before.

CHAPTER III.

THE POISONED GLASS.

It was a lovely morning.

Sir Sydney Dawson, O'Rafferty, and Tom Carden were sitting smoking in Harkaway's room.

Manisty had told them that they might expect their friend in an hour or two.

He was staying at a farm-house.

Monday had been to take him some clothes, and, as he had had a day and a night's rest, he was quite himself again.

Harvey, who had recovered from the effects of his wounds, had been able to come out.

He also came to Jack's room to welcome him on his return.

As he entered everyone shook him warmly by the hand.

"Glad to see you about again, Harvey," said Sir Sydney.

"All right, old boy, eh?" said Tom Carden.

"I haven't the pleasure of the gentleman's acquaintance, but if he's a friend of O'Harkaway's—I give him the honor of the O, because I am sure his ancestors must have been Irish chiefs—I am glad to see him," remarked O'Rafferty.

Harvey gracefully acknowledged the salutation.

"I'm told," he exclaimed, "that you expect Jack soon, and, though I'm a little shaky, I thought I would like to meet him."

"How's the widow?" asked Sir Sydney.

"Do you mean the Duchess of Woodstock?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Oh, she is quite well, thank you," replied Harvey, looking rather foolish.

"I don't like widows," exclaimed O'Rafferty; "they are too knowing."

"Hilda," said Harvey, "never loved her husband. She has assured me that she only married him to secure a position."

"Don't get excited, my dear fellow," replied Sir Sydney. "How many thousand a year has she?"

"Something like fifteen."

"Oh, Moses, come in!" cried O'Rafferty. "I'd marry her if she was third hand, and as ugly as the mother of Satan."

"Perhaps you won't have the chance," replied Harvey.

"Oh, it's like that, is it?" replied O'Rafferty; "well, I don't blame you, me boy. You've been making hay while the sun shines. More power to your elbow."

"Is it really a match between you and the fair Hilda?" asked Sir Sydney, looking up carelessly.

"I shall be very much annoyed if you say anything of the sort," said Harvey, crossly. "The Duchess of Woodstock has been very kind to me during my illness, that is all."

"I'm very sorry."

"There is nothing to be sorry for," continued Harvey, "only I object to having a lady's name coupled with mine, when there is no occasion for it."

At this moment when the discussion was becoming disagreeable, Monday burst into the room.

"Here him come, sare. Me bring him back in a carriage. Him all right now."

"Is he hurt at all Monday?" asked Harvey, anxiously.

"No, Master Dick, him sound as um roach; nothing the matter."

"I could fancy that we were in Spain or Greece," replied Sir Sydney, "and we were awaiting the return of a captive, after paying a heavy ransom to brigands."

"Ah," said Harvey, "you don't know Hunston so well as I do. Nothing would stop that fellow."

"Perhaps he is an Irishman,"

"As I am not you, I shan't do anything of the sort," replied Jack, laughing.

Going to the door, he called Monday.

"Sir," replied the black, grinning all over his face in his delight at seeing his master again.

"Open a couple of bottles of fiz. It's early to begin drinking, but we don't kill a pig every day," said he.

"Yes, sare."

"And I say, where's Buster?"

"Mr. Buster all right, sare; him not cry him eyes out" answered Monday.

"Oh, you black villain," said Buster, coming in from the outer room; "I've wetted two large sheets a-crying for Mr. Harkaway."

"You one big lie," screamed Monday; "you drunk last night in the 'Three Cups.' Perhaps you crying drunk. I hear you say, good job if Mr. Harkaway never come back more."

"You double-dyed scoundrel!" said the scout, "I never see the like of you, no, never; and I've seen a few black-hearted ones in my time, but it remained for a black-skinned un to lick the lot."

"I give you one poke with spear," cried Monday, running to the rack.

"I'll give you a jolly good English punch on the head, you black thief," replied Buster.

"Hold your row," said Jack.

"However, Mr. Harkaway, you can keep such an inky abortion in your service, I don't know," cried Buster.

"There's half-a-crown for you," said Sir Sydney.

"Inky abortion" is good; I admire the phrase."

"Thank you, sir, you're a gentleman," said Buster, pocketing the money.

"Go to Mr. Kemp's rooms," said Jack.

"Yes, sir."

"And if he is there, tell him, with my compliments, I shall be glad to see him."

Buster went away, and Jack handed his friends cigars, and poured out the wine for them.

He and Harvey were like two brothers meeting after a long separation.

They talked together for a length of time, and Sir Sydney exclaimed:

"If you two have done spooning, I'm on for a mild game at loo. Limit it to four-and-sixpence."

"Just as you like," answered Jack.

"I can't go higher, for my guardian has been very hard on me lately, and the Jews are equally disagreeable. My borrowing powers are like my loo."

"Why?"

"Because they are both limited."

Jack laughed, and produced the cards.

They played for nearly two hours, when Buster returned.

"Excuse me, will you?" exclaimed Jack. "I want to speak to my scout."

He left his stake in the game on the table, and asked anyone who threw up to play for him.

Going to Buster, he said:

"You've been gone a long time."

"Yes, sir; very sorry, but couldn't help it. Mr. Kemp has left."

"Has Mr. Kemp left?" asked Jack, surprised.

"Yes, sir; taken his name off the books this morning."

"Did you see him?" asked Jack.

"Well, yes, sir; I did see him," replied Buster, in an hesitating manner.

"What did he say?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Nonsense, he must have said something," urged Jack.

"No, sir; he didn't."

"Where is he now?"

"Gone away, sir."

"Gone. Where?"

"Don't know, sir," replied Buster.

"You're a fool," said Jack. "Get out of my sight. Either you know a good deal, and won't speak, or—but I'm only wasting my breath in talking to you. I shall get a fresh scout."

"Perhaps you'd like a black one, sir," replied Buster, impudently.

"Look here," said Jack, "don't be cheeky, or I'll give you a jolly good hiding."

Buster went away muttering to himself, but what he said was inaudible to his master, who rejoined his companions.

The game went on with varying success, and another hour elapsed.

"Monday!" exclaimed Jack.

Buster made his appearance.

"Mr. Monday, sir, is washing up," he replied.

"Oh, bring me some soda and brandy, and fill these gentlemen's glasses with champagne," said Jack.

"Yes, sir."

The scout poured out the sparkling wine and went into the other room to get the soda and brandy.

"My deal," exclaimed Jack "and there's a miss."

"No, it's a single; all play," replied Harvey.

The cards were dealt, and Buster returned with a large glass foaming with soda and water.

Jack raised it to his lips.

He was about to drink, when Monday rushed into the room.

"You not drink, sare," he cried, "you not drink; I saw English white thief put something inside. It poison you."

Jack placed the glass on the table.

All looked blankly at one another.

Buster stood like a statue, and neither moved nor spoke.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BANK PORTER.

JACK was the first to recover himself. Turning to Monday, he said :

"What do you mean by saying that my scout put something in my glass?"

"Me see him do it, sare," replied Monday.

"Are you sure?"

"Sure as that Tuesday come after" Monday, replied the black.

"I don't want any of your jokes," said Jack, taking the glass in his hand again. "It is easy to see whether you are right or wrong. You persist in saying that the scout has tampered with the glass?"

"That it, sare," answered Monday, nodding his head up and down emphatically.

"I will take it to a doctor, who shall analyze its contents, and, if there is poison inside, we shall know."

Buster recovered himself a little.

"As if I should do such a thing, sir," he said. "Is a respectable man's character to be thrown away in a moment on the word of a black thief like that?"

"I don't accuse you," answered Jack.

"Throw it away, sir, and laugh at it as a bit of Mr. Monday's playful ways," replied Buster.

"No. It shall go to a doctor, and if poison is found inside, we shall know who put it there."

Seeing that he was determined to sift the matter thoroughly, Buster's manner changed.

"You need not take the trouble, sir," he said. "I did put something in the glass. Mr. Monday's right."

"What was it?" asked Jack, sternly.

"I don't know."

"Where did you get it?"

"Mr. Kemp gave it to me, sir," replied Buster, after some hesitation.

"As I suspected," said Jack; "you were not two hours gone to deliver a simple message. So he got hold of and tampered with you. Tell us about it."

"At first, sir, I said I would not do it, but he gave me five pounds, and told me it would only make you sleep, and it was good for you to have plenty of sleep after what you had gone through, and I consented at last; but I didn't mean any harm to you, sir. May I drop dead on the floor this minute if I did."

"I believe you," replied Jack, "for I don't think you would be such a fool as to risk your life in taking mine without an object. Be more careful in future."

"Do you let me off, sir?" cried Buster, delightfully, "I'll do anything to—"

"Don't make a noise my good fellow," replied Jack. "Hand over the five Mr. Kemp gave you, to Monday. He saved my life, perhaps, and deserves a reward."

With a very ill grace, Buster parted with the money, and slunk away, leaving Monday grinning at his evident chagrin.

"Him not like to give up money," he remarked.

"Break him heart to part with tin, Mast' Jack."

"You go and play. We don't want you any more," said Jack.

When the door closed, Jack said :

"Did you ever see such a determined enemy as Kemp is? He is as bad as Hunston."

"Perhaps acting under Hunston's orders," replied Harvey.

"That I am sure of because they were together in the cave. What can I do with him?"

"Let him go," replied Sir Sydney. "This is his parting shot. You hear that he has taken his name off the books of the college."

"I don't want my name mixed up in a criminal prosecution," exclaimed Jack, "but I must call in the protection of the law, if they won't let me alone."

"Oh! I should think you had heard the last of them by this time," remarked Harvey. "Hunston will not show his face for fear of Manisty."

"Very true, but Hunston has got a way of working in the dark, even if he is miles away. He works through other people, if you understand me. I will give you an instance. You remember the bank robbery?"

"Yes, it was on the night of my little dinner," said O'Rafferty.

"Exactly. Well, I never told you how they tried to mix me up in that business. Kemp got me to take my pass-book there. Well, Hunston had wounded the manager, and robbed the safe. I saw him go out, and was weak enough, instead of crying out about what I had seen, to sneak past the porter, and get back to college."

"And of course you had a visit from Kemp the next morning, and a lecture on circumstantial evidence," observed Sir Sydney.

"He hadn't the delicacy to wait till morning. He was on to me like lightning that night. You know I had a little money left me, and I had to give him half and insure my life in his favor for a heavy sum."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harvey, "that explains it all."

"Bejabbers, it's no wonder at all at all that he wants to make cold meat of ye," said O'Rafferty.

"I wonder what the next move will be?" remarked Jack. "The constant suspense I live in makes me as nervous as a dog. If I pass my greats, I shall take a cruise down the Mediterranean next long."

Monday knocked at the door.

"Some man's to see you, sare," he said.

"What is he like?" asked Jack.

"Common looking man, sare. Says you not know his name, but he friend of Mr. Kemp, sare, and if I tell that, then you see him at once. He say he something to do with bank."

"Oh! wait a minute," replied Jack, who added :

"This is some new dodge. Do three fellows mind going into my dressing-room while I see the man? You can have the door ajar, and hear everything that is said. Your evidence may be useful."

Making no objection, Sir Sydney Dawson, Harvey and O'Rafferty went into the dressing-room.

Tom Carden had gone away some time before, after satisfying himself that Jack, as an athlete, was in no way impaired by his adventures.

The visitor was ushered in by Monday, and Jack instantly recognized him as the bank porter.

With an insolent familiarity, the fellow sat down with his cap on.

"Take your cap off, and stand up," cried Jack, angrily.

"Beg pardon," replied the porter, "but we're pretty equal, I think; howsoever, if it pleases you, I'll do it."

He rose, and removed his cap, adding :

"I've come on business."

"What do you want?"

"Money."

"What for?" continued Jack.

"To hold my tongue. Mr. Kemp used to pay me and was always good for a quid when I called. Lor! how he used to hate the sight of me," said the porter, with a chuckle.

"Mr. Kemp has quitted the university," said Jack.

"I know it, and that's why I'm on to you. Give me something to keep quiet, and I'll say nothing about the robbery."

"You can't say I did it."

"I'd say anything. You were there at the time, and I could have you arrested," replied the porter.

"Well, you shall have five pounds," answered Jack, "only you must admit that it was Kemp and his friend who robbed the bank."

"Of course it was," replied the porter; "they had squared me, and it was arranged that it should be fixed on you. Only how are you going to prove it? That's were the shoe pinches."

"Weren't you ashamed to lend yourself to such a conspiracy?"

"Well, you see, I'm a poor man with a family, and if I can make a bit over and above my wages, it's all clear business to me," answered the porter.

Jack advanced to the dressing-room and threw the door open.

"I think you have heard enough, gentlemen," he said.

The three men stepped forth.

"Quite enough to convince us that this fellow has come here to extort money," answered Sir Sydney Dawson.

The porter turned pale.

"I didn't bargain for no spying, but give us the posh, and I'll say no more about it."

"Not a rap do you have out of me," replied Jack. "Be off, or as I live I will prosecute you. Take care never to show your ugly face again. These gentlemen are my witnesses that you came here to extort money from me, which is an indictable offense. Be off this instant."

The porter was about to speak again.

But Jack took him by the back of the neck, and kicked him into the passage, while Monday finished his expulsion by running him out on the landing and shutting the door in his face.

"That's lucky," said Jack. "It is the last of my difficulties safely tided over. With Hunston a fugitive from justice with a price on his head, and Kemp gone away from the university for fear of exposure, I think I may look forward to a little peace."

Everyone congratulated him.

Still strolling about, they found themselves again in the Corn Market.

Close by the tobacconist's shop.

"Look," said Harvey, "there is Dawson."

"Spoonng as usual," replied Jack. "He is always there after that little girl with the blue eyes and the fair hair. La Favorita he calls her."

"Does she like him?"

"I think so. It's a great shame, though for one in his position, he knows very well he can't marry her, and the flirtations generally end in something bad."

"How moral you're getting," remarked Harvey.

"Is it fair? I ask you. The girl, I suppose, has friends, and is respectable. What is to become of her?" asked Jack. "I shall go in and buy a cigar."

"All right, stroll on," said Harvey, shaking his hand.

Jack entered the shop.

Sir Sydney colored as he saw Harkaway, and the girl became a deep crimson.

CHAPTER V.

LA FAVORITA.

"COME in, Harkaway," said Sir Sydney Dawson, seeing Jack at the door of the tobacconist's, "and give us your valuable opinion on a point of importance."

Jack walked up to the counter and said:

"How do, Ada?"

The girl who officiated behind the counter, smilingly answered that she was quite well, and hoped Mr. Harkaway, who was an old customer, was the same.

"None so dusty," replied Jack, "all things considered."

Ada, or La Favorita, as it pleased Sir Sydney to christen her, was a pretty little blue-eyed, flaxen-haired child of seventeen or thereabouts, with well-formed mouth and dimpled chin; her nose was what Tennyson has defined a slight "snub" to be:

"Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower,"

in his latest poem.

Altogether she was a winning, fairy-like little thing.

"What is this important point?" asked Jack, helping himself to a choice Partaga, and putting down a shilling to pay for it, that being its price.

"I have told the Favorita that she is the prettiest girl in all Oxford, and she won't believe it," replied Sir Sydney.

"Modesty," said Jack.

The girl blushed, and said, in a low, sweet voice:

"An excellent thing in women," as Shakespeare, that profound judge of men and things, says."

"Sir Sydney is always paying me compliments, Mr. Harkaway."

"Is the truth a compliment, Harkaway?" said Dawson. "I appeal to you as a man who is going to take up logic, when he goes into the schools."

"Logic," replied Jack, "has nothing to do with love making. When in love, a man must be in a state of mind which enables him to sink below reasoning."

"Rise superior to it, you mean," replied Sir Sydney, with a laugh.

"Well, I'm sure I've never been in love and don't want to be," said La Favorita.

"Don't tell stories, Ada. Where do you expect to die when you go to?—I mean—put it the other way, you know," said Sir Sydney, looking at her reproachfully.

"Love is all nonsense," she cried, playing restlessly with the Partages in the box.

"If you've never been in love, how can you know?" said Sir Sydney.

She made no answer.

"Let those cigars alone," he went on, tapping her knuckles with a briar root pipe; "you will spoil them. I never saw such fidgety, mischievous creatures as women are."

"You're always scolding and finding fault with me," said Ada.

"Don't worry the poor child," remarked Jack.

"Poor child!" repeated Sir Sydney; "you should hear her rap out at me, sometimes; don't you, Ada?"

"When you deserve it," she answered, casting down her eyes.

"What do you think she wants now?" continued the baronet.

"Couldn't even form the foundation of a remote guess. Is it a new bonnet?"

"Nothing half so mild as that."

"What then?"

"Feminine caprice amounts to tyranny. I am commanded to take my Favorita to the masked ball."

"Why not?" continued Ada.

"Because," said Jack, "a girl of your age is best out of such scenes."

Ada tossed her pretty head angrily.

"Anyone would think," she said, "that you were my father."

"Not old enough for that," replied Jack.

"Well, my brother, anyhow."

"Have you got a brother?" asked Jack, with a searching glance.

"Two."

"Let me ask you a question. Do you think they would like to see you going to a masked ball at the theater with a casual acquaintance, who is your superior in birth, education, fortune, breeding and position?"

Jack spoke severely, but he did it for the girl's good. She, however, did not like the tone he adopted at all. for her face became as red as possible, and tears came to her eyes.

"I didn't think you'd insult me, Mr. Harkaway," she exclaimed.

"Hang it all!" said Sir Sydney. "You're a little too hard on my Favorita; I don't like it."

"Very sorry if I've said anything I ought not," re-

plied Jack. "I only meant it for the best. Come outside, Dawson, and let me say a word to you."

Sir Sydney followed him to the door rather sullenly, and exclaimed :

"What on earth is the matter with you to-day?"

"I don't like to see a poor girl like that going to perdition. It doesn't matter to me whether you get wild or not, but I think you are behaving shamefully in making the girl love you. What can the end of it be?"

Sir Sydney got angry.

"That's my business," he answered. "I won't allow you or any other man to talk to me like this, and I don't thank you for your infernal impertinence."

Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"What have you to do with it? Is the girl anything to you?" continued Sir Sydney.

"Nothing."

"Well, then, be good enough in future to turn your attention to your own affairs. You have enough to do with your Hunstons and your Kemps."

"You needn't be insolent," said Jack.

"You provoked it."

"I only warned you for your own good. You have sisters of your own. How would you like?"

"You shall not talk to me. By Heaven, this is too much," cried Sir Sydney. "Leave me at once, unless you want a riot in the street."

"I've done my duty," said Jack. "Good-morning; you will not blame me when you are calmer. I know how these flirtations end nine times out of ten. You can't marry the girl. What is her future? Suicide or shame."

Jack strode away without another word, and Sir Sydney Dawson, very pale, re-entered the shop.

Those parting words of Jack's rang in his ears like a sentence of death,

Suicide or shame!

But lighting a fresh cigar, he stifled the still small voice of conscience, and made La Favorita happy by a promise that he would take her to the masked ball.

"You do love me, dearest?" said Ada, looking at him tearfully.

"Better than anything else in the world, little goose," replied Sir Sydney.

"And you won't let anyone set you against me?"

"Is it likely? I am not a child, my pretty baby."

"And some day you will keep your promise and—make me your wife?" she went on.

"Some day," he answered, dryly.

"Oh, I can trust you," she continued. "Better men than you, dear, have married worse women than me."

A couple of grooms coming into the shop stopped any further conversation of an amorous nature.

Jack walked up to St. Giles' to cool himself.

"It's a rascally shame," he said to himself, "that any fellow should take a mean advantage of an unsuspecting, innocent girl, like that. I wonder how men can be such blackguards."

In the midst of his reflections, he ran up against Mr. Mole.

"Hullo, Harkaway!" exclaimed Mr. Mole. "The very man I wanted to see."

"What's up now, sir?" asked Jack.

"A bachelor's party. Nothing more nor less."

"Are you going to give one?"

"I am. I have gone back to my old house. Being a bachelor, I can do as I like, and the fact is, I want to make myself popular," continued Mr. Mole.

"What for?" inquired Jack.

"There is going to be an election for the city of Oxford, and I have determined to stand."

"You, sir?" cried Jack, in astonishment.

"Why not? Am I not a man of discretion, with some money? For a long time past I have felt that my light has been hidden under a bushel."

"Well," said Jack, humoring him, "there are many worse men in parliament than you are, Mr. Mole."

"Yes," answered Mole, drawing himself up proudly, "my career is that of a statesman. I am a born politician. The senate of this great nation shall thrill with my eloquence, and the admiring populace shall cry aloud—'A Mole, a Mole forever! Hurrah for the people's friend!'"

"You will go in as a liberal?"

"Certainly—I may say as a radical."

"Then you've no chance for Oxford, sir," replied Jack.

"That remains to be seen. I shall challenge the suffrages of the electors, and stir up their dormant patriotism. Why should the people remain serfs? Wait till I issue my address. I am busily engaged on it now."

"I wish you luck, sir," answered Jack.

"The people are crushed; they are poor. In fact I just now had a convincing proof of the demand for money in this city, for some one picked my pocket in Corn Market, as I was standing by the 'Clarendon,' rehearsing my speech to the electors."

Jack laughed.

"Come to my house, Harkaway," continued Mr. Mole, "and give me the benefit of your advice."

He took Jack's arm, and they walked on together.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. MOLE'S AMBITION.

MR. MOLE ushered Jack into his study, and opened a bottle of wine, which made him loquacious and inclined to be communicative.

"I am going to open my heart to you, Harkaway," he said.

"Thank you, sir," replied Jack.

"It matters little whether I am successful or not in this electoral contest; I must go to the poll, however."

"What for?"

"It is a part of my programme."

"I don't understand," said Jack.

"You will, presently. One of my pupils, Lord Tollington,"

"The man I fought with swords."

"Precisely. Well, his friends are high in office in the present ministry, and I have asked him for a post."

"What post?" demanded Jack.

"Governor of Limbi."

"But Limbi does not belong to the British Crown."

"I know that. It does not at present, but I have been in communication with Monday, who, you know, is King of Limbi. He has consented, for the sum of one thousand pounds, which I am going to give him, to formally hand over Limbi to Queen Victoria."

"Is Monday such a fool as to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage?"

"He says he shall never go back, because he should die if he left you," replied Mr. Mole.

"I believe the poor fellow is devoted to me."

"I know, and more than that, he is in love with an English girl."

"I suspected as much. Who is she?"

"That pretty, fair-haired, blue-eyed girl in the cigar shop in the Corn Market."

"La Favorita?" exclaimed Jack, in surprise.

"That's what your friend, Sir Sydney Dawson calls her, I believe. But she does not dislike Monday, or at least she used not to. Perhaps Sir Sydney has cut Monday out."

"What did Monday tell her?"

"She should be the queen of Limbi. He will keep his rank still, you know; we can't help him calling himself His Highness the King of Limbi, though he will have no kingdom."

"Go on," said Jack.

"Tollington says that I must bring my name prominently forward before the government will notice me; that's why I am going to stand for Oxford city as an advance liberal."

"I begin to see."

"Whether I win or not I shall have my name in all the papers and in everybody's mouth, and when Limbi, which may be an important settlement for the English in the Malay Archipelago, is the property of the British crown, I shall be appointed governor."

"Who more fit," said Jack.

"No one; have I not spent many months of my valuable life there?"

"Of course you have."

"Fancy going out there with plenary powers, and being called 'Your Excellency.' It is a dream of bliss, Harkaway."

"Well, sir, you know best," replied Jack. "For my part, I'd rather stop here."

"Every man to his taste, as the French say. Drink up and have another cigar. You will rally round me at the election?"

"When does it take place?"

"The writ will be issued in a day or two. My address will be published in all the papers the day after to-morrow," replied Mr. Mole.

"I'll be there, sir, so you had better look out for yourself."

"P'raps she won't have black man, sare," he replied.

"I'll you what, Master Monday, you're going on in a very sly way," said Jack. "The girl's a pretty one though, and if you can get her you'll be lucky."

"She not so kind now as used to was to be, sare," answered Monday, as a cloud passed over his face.

"You've got Sir Sydney Dawson to thank for that," remarked Jack.

"Ha!" cried Monday, all his savage nature coming into his face, "you know the lady me love, sare?"

"Yes; little Ada in the cigar shop."

"In Corn Market?"

"Yes."

"And Sare Sydney he talk love words to her?"

"She's going to a ball with him—the masked ball, I mean, which takes place next week," said Jack.

"Ha! Monday be there, dressed as chief, with all his kill weapons, and—"

"I say," interrupted Jack, "don't you look so murderous. You can't kill people in this country without having your neck stretched for it."

"Will Mast' Jack do what he can with Missy Ady for poor Monday?" answered the black, the rage dying out of his eyes at this reproof.

"Yes, I will, gladly; for I think you might make the girl happy with the money Mr. Mole is going to give you, and I fear Dawson means—but no matter, I'll put a spoke in your wheel if I can!"

"Thank you, Mast' Jack. Monday um humble servant, sare. You put spoke in um wheel for Monday, and um not forget you, sare," replied Monday.

One of the best traits of his character was his strong sense of gratitude.

"Look here, you piece of ebony," continued Jack, "I want you to do something for me."

"Yes, sare."

"Has that pie thing come?"

"In the other room, sare."

"Bring it here; and go to Mr. Mole's house and steal his kid. He's only got one left now. Ambonia has taken the other in the balloon as I told you, and I fear Mr. O'Rafferty's shot killed it, but there is no telling, as those nigger brats have as many lives as a cat."

"Steal um kid, sare," asked Monday, grinning: "what um do that for?"

"A lark; you'll see presently; and I say, bring in a half-a-dozen pounds of treacle."

Monday nodded, and went to entice the child away from his father's house.

This was not difficult, as the little Isaac liked Monday, who spoke his mother's language.

He found him playing in the street, having escaped the watchful care of Mrs. Bimms, who had been reinstated in her position as housekeeper.

Mrs. Bimms hated the black child.

"Let the ugly little nigger thing run in the street, drat it!" she said; and perhaps it will have the luck to get ran over."

This, however, was not its fate.

CHAPTER VII.

A DISH FOR A KING.

In about half-an-hour Monday returned with the Little Mole, who was very friendly with Jack, and ran up to him.

"Will you stop and play in my rooms?" asked Jack.

"Yes, me stop and play. What give play with?" replied the lad, who was now about four years old.

"Oh, take down a spear, and play at pricking Mata-bella."

This, it will be remembered, was Monday's name.

"Thank you, sare, me rather not," exclaimed Monday. "You tell him prick one beast scout, they call him Buster."

The boy amused himself with looking at Jack's trophies.

All at once he said:

"You see maman?"

"No," answered Jack.

"She come back soon with little brother?"

"I hope so."

"You not sure? Me like maman best than papa. He not so kind, and Mrs. Bimms me hate. She snake. If I had spear I would prick. She slap um here," said the little fellow, putting his hand behind him.

Just then there was a knock at the door.

"Open Sesame!" exclaimed Jack.

Monday opened the door, and to their great surprise who should walk into the room, but Ambonia, leading the other offspring of Mr. Mole's passion by the hand!

The brothers ran into one another's arms.

"Well," said Jack, in the greatest astonishment. "may I be knocked into the middle of next week, if this isn't enough to take a fellow's breath away."

"You not expect see me," replied Ambonia, smiling.

"Frankly, I did not. Monday, hand Mrs. Mole a chair."

"Yes, sare. How um do, mum?" said Monday.

"Oh, I'm as well as can be expected, Mata-bella," answered Ambonia. "I been up in a balloon."

"Tell us all about it?" asked Jack.

"Me go up, up, up—and oh, long way; over France—and then the gas go out, and the balloon it come down and stick in tree, and fall."

"Were you hurt?"

"Yes, little hurt, but I hold the child. He got shot in him, but not dead."

"That's a comfort."

"Peoples in farm take me in, and when all well, and the child not much more matter with him, I sell my watch, chain, ring, all, pay peoples, and come back. Know you one friend mine. Come to you first, Jack. Always liked you."

"Thank you," replied Jack, with an attempt at a blush. "Very much grattered and flattifed, as Carden would say."

"Now, you tell me all 'bout Mist' Mole, my husband."

"Certainly. He's all right. It wasn't his fault, you know, that the balloon went off."

"Me know. It was nasty man who shoot poor child mine, and cut rope of balloon," said Ambonia.

"Well, to tell you the truth, Mole's been inconsolable, cried his eyes out, used two sheets an hour to dry them—pocket handkerchiefs no good at all."

"Ah! Isaac love me still," replied Ambonia, wiping her eyes.

"I see you have been kind to other child," she exclaimed, calling the little fellow to her, and embracing it.

"Which is which?" asked Jack.

"The one shot, him mine, but the other, him Alfura's; both call me maman."

"Now, look here," said Jack, "will you do what I tell you?"

"Yes, me do."

"Mr. Mole gives a party to-night, and I want to have a lark with him."

"Where he now?"

"At the old house in St. Giles'. He's given up the country one and come back."

"Ah; he come back. He got that Mrs. Bimms?" asked Ambonia, her eyes sparkling.

"Yes. He couldn't get any one else. You can sack her easily; don't kick up a row now."

"Me wait, if you help me," replied Ambonia, biting her lips.

"Of course I will."

"What um want Ambonia to do?"

"I'll tell you. First of all I have promised Mole a Limbi pie, and I mean to put little Isaac inside. There is the crust. It's quite big enough, and I'll bore holes for air."

"You not hurt him. Bless um little heart," said Ambonia, with motherly affection in her eyes.

"Not I. I wouldn't hurt a hair of his wool for the world."

"And what I to do?"

"You must come in after dinner, dressed as I tell you. A thick vail will hide your face, and the dodge will be for you to tell Mr. Mole's fortune."

"Tell um his fortune?"

"Yes, I shall introduce you as the great Fetish from the East. He will ask if his wife is alive, if he will get into parliament, and if he will be governor of Limbi."

"Governor of Limbi?" she repeated.

"That's the latest idea," answered Jack. "Monday has sold him the kingdom, which he means to give to our queen, if the prime minister will make him governor."

"He got one governor himself already," replied Ambonia, pointing to herself with a smile.

"Quite right, too. I wouldn't give a rap for a woman who couldn't manage her husband."

"Me do."

"Keep him down, Amby, my dear," replied Jack, jovially; "trample on him, sit on him, and pull his hair, and claw him with the marks of the ten commandments."

"Me do all that," continued Ambonia, looking pleased at Jack's praise.

"You stop here till Monday comes for you. I'll coach you up," said Jack; "and now, what will you have? You must be tired. Shall it be a meat tea."

"Very nice; that do well," she answered.

Jack gave Monday orders not to admit any one, and to prepare something for Ambonia.

He went over to Harvey's rooms, and found him looking out a white tie and his evening clothes for Mr. Mole's party.

"Such a spree, Dick," he said.

"What is?"

"Ambonia's turned up."

"Go on," said Harvey, inerudulously.

"She has, and I've got her bottled up in my room."

"Hurroosh!" cried Harvey; "you'll plant her on Mole, I suppose."

"Rather."

"What is the game?"

"I want you to help me to draw up a little handbill, to be printed immediately."

"A what?" asked Harvey.

"This is my idea," said Jack, taking a pen and a sheet of paper.

"The Pythian Priestess rends aside the vails of the future."

"Veil of the future is good, so is Pythian," answered Harvey.

"And," continued Jack, "initiates the neophyte into the secrets of time. Will that do?"

"Stunning."

"The P. P. is from the far and mystic East, and her wonderful abracadabra has—"

"What's that?" demanded Harvey.

"Blest if I know; an Arabian charm, I think. It's something to do with magic."

"All right; cut along."

"Has," continued Jack, "been pronounced by all the crowned heads of Europe, the modern Delphic oracle."

"Put an N. B.," said Harvey. "Say the Pythian Priestess backs herself to lick table-turning, commonplace gipsy fortune-telling, and all similar rot into a cocked hat."

"That would be too slangy," cried Jack, "wouldn't it? We will add—Moderate terms for private parties; now I'll go and get this printed, and make Mole engage the priestess."

"Is that all? Can't we do anything else?"

"You're growing wicked, Dick."

"I've been laid up for some months, and I want a little amusement."

"Well, I've got a Limbi pie—*Pate de Limbi*—for old Mole."

"What does that mean?"

"It means a great big pie crust, with a little Mole

inside it. Don't it remind you of the nursery rhyme?" said Jack.

"Which one? There are so many of them. Let dogs delight?"

"No. 'Sing a song of sixpence; something about four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie.'"

"It's a dish to set before a king;
The queen was in the parlor,
Eating bread and honey;
The king was in his counting-house,
Counting out his money—

That's it. Cut off to the printer's, old man. What time does Mole put on the feed?"

"Eight, sharp."

"I'll be there."

"Not a word about Ambonia," said Jack, warningly.

"Do you take me for a kid?" answered Harvey.

Jack went to the printer's, had the bill struck off, and took it to Mr. Mole, who unhesitatingly engaged the Pythian priestess for the evening at the moderate remuneration of one sovereign.

"She will cause some excitement, and more amusement. Let her come, Harkaway," remarked Mr. Mole.

"All right, sir."

"Are you off?"

"I must go home and dress. White choker, and all that."

"Don't forget the *Pate de Limbi* you promised me, Harkaway," said Mr. Mole.

"No, sir, I won't. It shall be a dish to set before a king," answered Jack.

"I mean to make it a great feature of the evening, and make a speech over it, see if I don't. I have practiced in private, and am becoming quite an orator."

"Good-bye, sir. *Sans adieu*," answered Jack.

He hurried back to his room, where Ambonia, having just finished a big tea, was talking to Monday, and playing contentedly with the children.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. MOLE'S PARTY.

Mrs. Bimms, who was once more Mr. Mole's housekeeper, did her utmost to do honor to her master's guests.

She was delighted at being reinstalled in her old place.

All the best china and plate were brought into use, and the table in the dining-room looked magnificent.

At seven o'clock the gentlemen who were invited began to arrive, and were amiably received by Mr. Mole.

They separated into little groups, after the manner of university men, who always form themselves into sets.

From a famous recipe given me by the chief cook to the king of Limbi."

"Where's that?" asked an irreverent gownsman.

"China Seas," answered another.

"Allow me, my youthful enthusiast," said Mr. Mole, "to correct your geography; Limbi is not in the China Seas. It is in the Malay Archipelago, and as I have been there, I ought to know."

"Here, here I!" exclaimed Jack.

"Very much here, here," exclaimed Sir Sydney Dawson.

"This *Pate de Limbi* is a magnificent dish, and you will all, I hope, agree with it!"

"This is useful knowledge," said Harvey.

"No interruption, if you please," replied Mr. Mole, angrily. "The Limbi pie is a dish for a king. Taste it first, and chaff it afterwards; is that fair, or is it not?"

No one made any reply.

"Monday," said Mr. Mole.

"Sare," replied the black.

"Bring in this masterpiece of your countrymen's art. Bring in the *Pate de Limbi*."

"Coming, sare," answered Monday, with difficulty concealing a grin.

Expectation was on tiptoe.

Every man wondered what on earth this extraordinary pie was like.

"Made of babies, I'll bet," whispered Sir Sydney, to his immediate neighbor.

The neighbor at this announcement, which was given with an air of authority, was taken ill, and retired in a hurry to an adjoining apartment.

The pie, which was as much as Monday could carry conveniently, was placed upon the table.

Mr. Mole looked at it curiously.

Harkaway sat on his right hand, and he said to him: "How do you carve it? I am not an engineer, and I don't know how to cut through the mountains."

"You don't cut it at all, sir," replied Jack.

"What then?"

"The lid lifts off, and you spoon it out."

"Oh, I see. Monday, plates."

Mr. Mole took up a large spoon, and with the other hand lifted off the lid.

"Now, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "I will make you acquainted with the merits of this eastern delicacy."

All eyes were fixed upon him.

Suddenly, as the lid was removed, and the spoon inserted, the little Mole sprang up.

To keep him quiet, Jack had half filled the pie with treacle, which the child had been industriously sucking up.

He was covered with the sticky stuff from head to foot.

Without meaning it, Mr. Mole had hit his tender offspring in the eye with the big spoon.

Isaac had some of his mother's temper in him.

Uttering a howl of rage, he sprang upon his father, and putting his treacherous arms round his neck, bit his ear sharply.

"Oh, Lord save us!" cried Mr. Mole. "What is this? Help, help! take the little demon off, somebody."

Loud were the shouts of laughter which arose on every side.

The position of Mr. Mole was comic in the extreme.

The louder he shouted, the closer clung the child to him, besmearing him with treacle, and biting his left ear.

"Oh, the brute, he is biting my ear off, drat him!" cried Mr. Mole, furiously.

No one seemed disposed to come to his assistance.

Rising from his chair, Mole seized the child with both hands, and forced him back into the pie.

No sooner had he done so than the boy bobbed up again.

Mole put the lid on.

The little Isaac forced it up, like a sprite in a pantomime.

Getting on a chair, Mole sat on the lid, his feet resting on the table.

"Harkaway," he exclaimed, looking severely at Jack, "this is one of your tricks."

"No sir; the little beggar must have eaten his way into the pie."

"Get off," cried Sir Sydney, "you'll smother the child. Shame! shame!"

"Shame, shame! Beastly chouse!" echoed several men, still laughing heartily.

"What am I to do?" asked Mole looking blankly around him.

"Get off! Off!" cried the men.

"Am I to have my left ear gnawed down to a grizzly stump?" demanded Mr. Mole.

Jack threw his voice into the interior of the pie.

Imitating a half-choked child, he exclaimed:

"Oh, papa, me want get out; me stifle. Let um out, please, papa."

A Worcester man who was endowed with fine sentiments, was outraged with the horrible turn affairs seemed to be taking.

"Get off, you, sir!" he exclaimed. "You are a disgrace to humanity!"

A dish of potatoes was near him.

Taking one up, hot and steaming, he threw it at Mr. Mole.

"Oh, my ear! He's bunged up my earhole!" cried the wretched Mole.

"Serve you right," said a Brasenose man, favoring him with a brace of potatoes.

"I don't like to be left out in the cold," said Sir Sydney, and he took to throwing potatoes.

The example was contagious.

"It's a breach of hospitality," remarked O'Rafferty.

"But, bedad, he'll kill the child, and I'll chuck a murphy."

A shower of potatoes fell upon Mr. Mole.

He tottered on his seat.

He fell.

But rising again directly, he took the pie in his arms and rushed into the passage with it.

Here he encountered Mrs. Bimms.

"What is the matter, sir?" she said.

Mr. Mole glanced at her for a moment, not having breath enough to make any reply.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PYTHIAN PRIESTESS.

WHEN he recovered himself, he said pantingly:

"Take this wretched chid, bathe him, and put him to bed."

"Child, sir? Are you mad? I see no child," replied Mrs. Bimms.

"He is in this pie."

"In the pie? Oh, Lord!"

Mr. Mole set the *Pate de Limbi* down on the floor of the hall, and the little Mole jumped out.

"Well I never did!" exclaimed Mrs. Bimms. "Who's been and done this?"

"It's a trick," said Mr. Mole.

"Oh, those Oxford gentlemen! What will they do next?"

"They'd bring my wife back if they could," replied Mr. Mole, "but that, thank goodness, is out of their power; she is gone."

"And a good job too, sir. If I was to see that black creature again, I do think I should be tempted to hang her."

"I would be a toss up between you, but I think I'd back Ambonia," answered Mr. Mole with a ghastly smile.

"Let us hope that we shall never meet," said Mrs. Bimms, solemnly. "I love my kind, but I can't abear the heathen vixens."

"Don't talk, woman; secure the child, and get me some hot water. I'm as sticky as a burr with treacle, and I do believe that half my left ear's gone," exclaimed Mr. Mole.

Mrs. Bimms was recalled to herself.

She took the child away and put him to bed, administering many a slap on the way because he kicked, and raved and bit so abominably.

Hot water and a towel put Mr. Mole all right again.

He rejoined his guests.

Jack had meanwhile explained the joke, and when it was understood that the little "nigger boy" was not hurt, the excitement calmed down.

The supper proceeded.

Monday and the waiters cleared the table, upon which wine and spirits were placed, as well as cigars.

Everyone began to enjoy themselves.

Mr. Mole whispered to Jack:

"When shall we have the Pythian priestess in? I am anxious to consult her."

"When you like, sir," replied Jack.

"I will ask the company."

Mr. Mole rose.

"Gentlemen," he exclaimed, "I have engaged, at a great expense, a wonderful lady, who can, as she asserts, peep into the future."

"Hear! hear!" said Jack,

"Can your priestess tell who is going to win the University Boat Race this year, Oxford or Cambridge?" asked Carden, whose mind was nothing if it did not run on boating.

"Perhaps; let us see. Harkaway, be good enough to hand round the circulars of the Pythian priestess, and kindly tell Monday to request her attendance at once. We will soon prove whether she is an imposter or not."

Mr. Mole smiled blandly.

"I will myself question her first," he continued.

"Bravo!" said Harvey.

"There are a few questions which I wish to put to her, and as I wish to act fairly and above board, I will tell you gentlemen what they are."

"First. Shall I be returned as member for Oxford?

"Second. Shall I become governor of the important province of Limbi?

"Third. Is my wife Ambonia—wretched creature!—alive?"

"After this, any gentleman who likes may interrogate the oracle."

Mr. Mole sat down amidst a buzz of approval.

"Here comes the Pythian priestess, sir," said Jack.

"Let her be seated," answered Mole.

Jack put himself by the side of Ambonia, and guided her to a chair.

She was clad in a mystical sort of costume, which Jack had obtained from a shop where theatrical dresses were sold.

The skirt was of white muslin, ornamented with death's heads, snakes, birds, and beautiful fishes.

A long thick veil concealed her face, and no one could have recognized her.

"The priestess is seated, sir," replied Jack, as Ambonia took a chair at the further end of the room.

Whispering in her ear, he added:

"Don't forget what I told you."

She inclined her head.

"Now," said Mr. Mole, "I will rush upon my fate."

He advanced to the priestess.

"You must kneel sir," said Jack.

"Kneel!" repeated Mr. Mole.

"Yes. She will not answer any questions unless you do."

"But this seems rather undignified."

"The Khan of Turkey, and the Great Mogul, and the Shah of Persia, and the Tycoon of Japan, and the—"

"Stop, stop!" cried Mr. Mole. "If all these illustrious personages did it, I suppose I must."

He knelt down before Ambonia.

"Let me put the questions," said Jack, who cleared his throat and added:

"Will this gentleman be elected for Oxford?"

"No," answered Ambonia.

"Will he be Governor of Limbi?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Is his wife alive?"

"She is," answered Ambonia.

Mr. Mole rose and looked around him very uneasily.

"A very remarkable woman, if she only speaks the truth," he remarked.

"Always correct, sir," answered Jack.

The guests all seemed inclined to take their turn at the oracle.

"One moment," continued Mr. Mole. "Ask her where my wife is now."

"Where is Mrs. Mole at this particular instant?" said Jack.

"Here!" cried Ambonia, throwing off her veil and standing before her husband.

Mr. Mole's legs shook under him.

He turned green, and his eyes seemed to start from his head.

"Jockeyed again," remarked Sir Sydney.

"You not please see me?" asked Ambonia, sternly.

Mr. Mole turned upon Jack savagely.

"This is another of your confounded tricks!" he exclaimed.

He made a rush at Jack.

Ambonia stepped between them.

"If anybody's nose wring, it is yours," she said, "not Jack. He my friend. Come 'long. I show you who wring nose."

She seized him by the nasal organ, and dragged him round the room, to the infinite delight of the spectators.

He kicked and struggled, but all to no good.

At last she let him go.

This consisted of two horns, a tight-fitting red suit with a long tail, cloven feet, and a pitchfork.

He looked a very gentlemanly sort of devil, and was rather terrible in his black mask.

Sir Sydneu attired himself as a bear, and made up very well.

They dressed themselves at the costumer's, and went in a fly to the theater.

It was eleven o'clock when they arrived.

The house was crowded with fantastic-looking people, attired in the costumes of all nations, and representing every profession and celebrated character.

The whole of the pit had been boarded over for dancing, and the merry strains of the orchestra made many feet go tripping round in the mazy whirl of the waltz, or the wild, impetuous gallop.

Everybody being masked, it was almost impossible to tell who the masqueraders were.

The voices alone betrayed people to each other.

Sir Sydneu and Jack had made up their quarrel about the pretty shop girl.

Jack had asked him as a favor to give her up and let Monday see if he could gain her hand.

This the baronet refused to do.

"I will meet her to-night at the ball," he said, "and that shall be the last time."

Jack was satisfied, but he did not know what a selfish libertine Sir Sydneu was in his heart.

He had made a promise, which he never intended to keep.

La Favorita was enchanted at the idea of going to a ball.

She had told Sir Sydneu he would know her by being dressed as a nun, with a white ivory cross hanging by her side.

Monday had obtained Jack's permission to go as a Limbian chief, armed with spear and axe.

When Sir Sydneu and Jack entered the theater, a dance had just concluded.

Henry the Eighth pushed rudely against Jack, who gave him a whack on the head with his pitchfork.

"Hullo, who's cracking my knob?" said a voice.

Jack instantly recognized Harvey.

"So, Master Dick," he whispered, "you said you shouldn't go. I'll tell Hilda."

Harvey looked round in astonishment, but Jack glided away in the throng.

Sir Sydneu walked up to a pretty girl dressed as a Columbine.

"Buy me an orange, Mr. Bear," she said.

The bear immediately put his paws around her, and gave her a good hug.

"Oh, please don't, Mr. Bear," said the little woman, out of breath; "you make my stays run into me."

"Aren't you a little duck?" said Sir Sydneu. "Come along, and you shall have as many as you like."

"What a nice bear you are," she answered, taking his arm. "I'd no idea bears were so kind."

"It's a way we've got in our family," said Dawson, leading her to the refreshment bar.

Jack meanwhile wandered about, hitting and produng people right and left with his pitchfork.

No one lost his temper, for a masked ball is an occasion of license, and people are allowed to do pretty well as they please.

A masker dressed as a jester or fool, with cap and bells, and a bladder filled with air, tied by a string to a long stick, attracted Jack's notice, and he gave him a prod.

Instantly the fool let fly at him with his bladder.

Bang, flap, flap, bang, boom! went the bladder about Jack's head.

In vain he probed with his pitchfork, he could not keep off the shower of blows.

Each one made a loud hollow noise, and the crowd laughed immoderately at the fight between a fool and the fiend.

At last a lucky thrust from Jack caught the bladder, and pricked a hole in it.

With a loud report it dried up, and only a bit of useless string hung to the stick.

"I'm done for," said the fool, in a melancholy voice.

"I'm not a match for a she-devil, and I might have known he would be too much for me."

Jack glided to the mask's side.

"Mr. Mole, I'll tell your wife," he whispered.

"You know me! Who are you?" gasped the fool.

"No matter. You are found out, and Ambonia shall know."

"For Heaven's sake, my dear, good, worthy sir, forbear," said Mr. Mole. "I have slipped away on pretence of addressing a meeting of electors. Do not make my house miserable."

"Sir," replied Jack, "you are a disgrace to your sex. It is such men as you who make bad wives."

"This language to me," cried Mole angrily. "Who are you, sir, who dare to speak in such a manner?"

"You have chosen a proper costume; motley is the only wear for an old fool like you," cried Jack, who had all along disguised his voice.

"I will know who you are!" cried Mole furiously.

He made a dash at Jack, and tore off his mask before he could get out of the way.

This was contrary to all etiquette.

"Harkaway!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," replied Jack. "Give me back my mask, boher you. Quick! I don't want to be recognized, you confounded ass. If it had been anybody else, so help me goodness, I'd have knocked him down! You deserve a floofer."

Mole saw that he was seriously annoyed, and gave him the mask, which he hastily put on again.

Short as the time had been during which his face was exposed to view, there were several in the crowd who remarked his features.

This had an important result, as well be seen presently.

"I apologize. It shan't occur again," said Mole.

"I'll be hanged if it does!" replied Jack. "You lose

all the fun if people know who you are, and how you're dressed."

"You chaffed me, you must admit that."

"It was only fun."

"You won't tell Ambonia?" said Mole.

"Not I," replied Jack, who however intended to send a messenger up to his house directly with a note, informing Ambonia that her husband was at the ball, dressed as jester.

"She doesn't know I'm here, that's the beauty of it, and I intend to have a spree."

"Quite right, sir," Jack answered, recovering his good temper.

"It's a poor heart that never rejoices."

"Right you are. Stand a liquor."

"A good idea, Harkaway; I want a liquor. Mine is a constitution that requires a little stimulating occasionally. What do you say to a bottle of fiz? I wish you had not made a hole in my bladder, though."

Mr. Mole looked ruefully at the stick.

"Bust up!" remarked Jack.

"You punctured it and it collapsed."

"Which in plain English," said Jack, "that I pricked it and it went squash."

They went to the bar and ordered some champagne, which they drank.

Then Jack wished him good-bye for the present, and saying, "Stroll on sir," sought another part of the room.

In a corner he saw a bear with a nun.

"Dawson and Ada," he muttered. "I'll pipe them off if they don't twig me."

Getting into the shadow, he listened to their conversation, wishing for Monday's sake, to know what Sir Sydneu's intentions really were.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYSTERIOUS MASK.

At any other time Jack would have disdained to watch them, and listen to what they were saying.

But under the circumstances he did not see any harm in it, as his intentions were good.

The end excused the means.

La Favorita spoke first.

"Oh, Sydneu," she said, "I would do anything for you, but I cannot leave my situation and go right away."

"Why not?" asked Dawson. "I only want you to go to Abingdon, my Favorita. There you will have lodgings, and I will visit you."

"Will you marry me first?"

"No; I cannot promise that; but I will afterwards."

"Do not urge me further," she said, tearfully. "You have made me love you and that is misery enough. I feel I ought to break off our connection before worse comes."

You little silly thing," he replied, looking at her affectionately. "Why cannot you trust me?"

"I could marry one who really loves me."

"Who is it? Oh! I know who you mean. Harkaway's black servant; well, you must have a nice taste, I'm sure," he replied, sarcastically.

"He is a king, and idolizes me," replied Ada.

"My dear child," replied Sir Sydneu, with a sneer. "I am very sorry I did not know sooner, that you preferred men of color."

"I don't prefer them," she said, firmly. "But I must say, that I would rather be the wife of King Matabella, or Monday, as you call him, than—than—"

She hesitated, and then burst into tears.

"You don't know your own mind, my pet," replied Sir Sydneu, more kindly. "You will go to Abingdon to-morrow with me, and then if, after a week's reflection, you want to come back to your black prince, you shall. Hark! the band is playing a quadrille. Will you dance?"

He exercised a strange fascination over her.

Smiling through her tears, she looked up lovingly in his face, and consented.

He led her away in triumph, and Jack feared that from that moment she was lost.

"Poor thing!" he said to himself. "Dawson is a villain. I can do nothing for her now, but I will try to see her in the morning. It is a cruel shame, that men should be so heartless. Poor child! perhaps she has a father and mother whose hearts would be broken if she brought shame into their house."

He was about to turn round, when a tall woman, dressed as a Spanish grandee's wife faced him.

"Pardon me," she said, in a low voice. "I very nearly trod on your tail. Really devils should be more careful. Why do you not carry your tail over your arm?"

"Thank you," replied Jack. "I was thinking of something else for the moment."

"Of Sir Sydneu Dawson, and the Favorita, I presume?" returned the lady.

Jack started.

"How do you know that?" he asked.

"Oh, I know everything, even your name, Mr. Harkaway," answered the splendidly dressed Spaniard.

"By Jove," said Jack. "Who are you?"

"It is impertinent to ask questions, but I will tell you that I am dreadfully mysterious. Later in the evening, you may know me; at present I am not in a talkative mood."

"Rare thing for a woman," said Jack.

"Thank you; rather smart that. Poor Favorita, we were speaking of her just now. Don't you think your sex very heartless, Mr. Harkaway?"

"Some of them."

"Ah! of course. You belong to the virtuous set. Well, the fair Emily is lucky; still, I am sorry for that poor child in the nun's dress."

"Who the deuce can she be?" thought Jack. "She knows everything. I'll never leave her till I find out."

Can she be Hilda? No. It's not her voice, and she is rather taller. By George, I'm puzzled!"

"Now I must leave you," said the mask. "We shall meet again later in the evening."

"I cannot let you go like this," repeated Jack, whose curiosity was piqued.

"How can you detain me?"

"Only by persuasion. You will take a glass of wine with me, or honor me with your hand for a dance."

"Thank you; I have been dancing," answered the mask, with a slight air of fatigue, which Jack was not slow to notice.

"You must be tired," he exclaimed. "There is a little room at the back of the buffet, where we can sit down. Take my arm."

"I am afraid you will have a very bad opinion of me, for yielding so easily to your wishes," replied the mask, putting herself by his side.

"Oh, no. At a ball like this, everybody does as they like."

"Wouldn't Emily be jealous?"

"What the eye can't see, the heart does not grieve for," replied Jack, with a smile.

"Ah! you men, you men!" exclaimed the mask, flirting her fan; "you are all alike. Men were deceivers ever."

"Do you know what the French say?"

"They say so many things; their morality is so strange. Tell me what it is."

"When one has not the one whom he loves, one must love the one that one has."

"Then you mean to imply that you love me, whose face you have not seen."

"I am interested in you," said Jack, handing her to a seat in front of a little table.

The room was not full, containing only a dozen people, the others being engaged in dancing and frolicking in the ball-room.

"Waiter!" exclaimed Jack, "a bottle of champagne."

The wine was placed before them, and Jack drank to his fair companion.

The dark, flashing eyes looked tantalizingly at him through the holes in the domino.

A faint smile curled round the corners of the mouth, which was just visible through the fringe which hung round the edge of the mask.

"Thank you; I prefer to keep myself unknown," she answered.

"At least, tell your name, or give me an appointment, where can I meet you to-morrow."

"Impossible," replied the mask. "If my friends were to know that I was here, I should never be forgiven. Sir, is not that some one you know looking at you?"

"Monday," he exclaimed.

The black mask made no answer: he had his eyes fixed intently upon the mask.

Suddenly he pointed his spear at her, and made a thrust with it in her side.

The shock, without hurting the lady, caused her to fall from her chair.

The glasses shook on the table.

Monday ran to prevent them falling, but as he did so, very quickly changed their position.</

Lingering a moment behind, Jack got up and also prepared to join the gay and noisy throng on the stage.

The fun was growing fast and furious.

Mr. Mole had been drinking with everybody and was very screwed.

Jack found him perched on the edge of a private box, holding his mask in one hand, and waving the other to an admiring crowd.

He thought he was addressing the electors.

"Free and independent electors of the city of Oxford," he cried; "vote for Mole, the candidate of the peoples, and return him triumphantly at the head of the poll."

"Hear, hear!" cried Jack.

"This is the time when people should rise in their might and shew away the last remnant of aristocratic abusives."

"Down with the Radical!" cried a man.

"Don't throw oranges at him!" said Jack.

The hint was immediately taken, as he meant it should be, and a volley of oranges flew at the ambitious Mole.

"Gentlemanish call me a Radicalsh," said Mole. "What's a Radicalsh? Answer me that?"

He looked round him with drunken gravity.

An orange struck him in the eye.

"Orangesh in the eye," he muttered; "come to rotten eggsh next, and cabbage stalksh. Better stopsh."

Another volley striking him on various parts of the head, he fell backwards, and lay very contentedly at the bottom of the box.

"Vote for Molesh," he said, childishly, "vote for Molesh, that's the ticketsh. Hurrah for Molesh! I can do it."

Then he went off in a sound slumber, and snored like a pig in the sun.

Much amused, Jack strolled on, and at last was stopped by a dense crowd.

"What's the matter?" he inquired.

"Lady fainted, I think," was the reply.

Something struck Jack that the lady in question was his fair unknown.

She had shown symptoms of uneasiness, if not pain, just before leaving him.

By dint of pushing and considerable exertion, he got through the throng.

"Give her air," said some one.

Instantly four maskers took up a pallid form and carried it into a corridor, in which was a free current of cool air.

It was as Jack had surmised, the Spanish lady who was dressed with so much magnificence, and had roused his curiosity to such a pitch.

He came up just in time to see her mask raised from the face in order that some water might be thrown upon it.

The face was convulsed with agony, the limbs contorted and twitching in convulsive spasms, and deep groans broke from the livid lips.

Jack started back in horror. It was not a woman's face at all, but a man's. Mustache, whiskers and beard had all been carefully shaved off to give it a feminine appearance.

But still the features were too well known to Jack for him to mistake them for an instant.

The man, disguised as a woman, and now lying before him, surrounded by a gaping, curious crowd, was Kemp.

There could be no doubt of this.

What his object in going to the ball dressed as a Spanish lady could be was at present a mystery.

There was some horrible secret in his sufferings which was awful to witness.

"A doctor. Send for a doctor," cried a man, becoming alarmed.

"I am a physician," said a gentleman, dressed as a Cossack, throwing aside his mask.

He knelt by the side of Kemp and made an examination.

"He is dying!" he exclaimed.

"What is the matter with him?" asked Jack.

"He has all the symptoms of arsenical poisoning."

At the sound of Jack's voice Kemp opened his glassy eyes.

A horrible contraction passed over his features.

He tried to speak, and his lips moved.

He beat the air feebly with his hands.

Jack knelt at his side, and, bending down, put his ear to his lips.

"I am dying. Oh, God, how I suffer. I have met the fate I intended for you; how I know not. You are noble and good. Forgive a poor wretch who, in his last moments, asks you to pray for him. There should be no anger in the grave. Pray for me. Pray for me."

These words were gasped out painfully, one after the other, by Kemp.

"I forgive you, freely," said Jack, "and will pray silently to Heaven to pardon you all your sins."

Kemp looked pleased.

He clasped Jack's hand in a convulsive grasp.

The death rattle was heard in his throat.

His limbs jerked spasmodically.

And then all was over.

"Death is here," said the surgeon. "Back, all of you. Clear the place and send to the police-station for a stretcher. Back, I say. The mask is removed forever."

Quickly the horrified startled crowd fell back and sought the ball-room, from whence the strains of music proceeded as if nothing had happened.

Why should sudden death stay the proceedings of the night and spoil the enjoyment of the maskers?

No one knew who the victim was, except Jack; and what did they care because there was one atom less in the vast aggregate of humanity.

With difficulty Harkaway removed his hand from the rigid death-grasp of Kemp.

He too stole away silently, leaving the doctor and some of the attendants of the theater in charge of the corpse.

It seemed so strange to speak of one who was just before in the full enjoyment of health and spirits as the corpse.

But so it was.

Kemp, like Davis, had run his brief career, affording one more illustration of the fact that virtue, in the long run, will usually triumph over vice.

Harkaway had another one of his enemies wiped off the slate of life with the sponge of death.

Only Hunston now remained to worry him, and he was a fugitive from justice.

The police were actively searching for him, and there was a price set upon his head.

Still, as Jack rejoined the merry throng of maskers, he puzzled his brain to think how Kemp had come to his sad and awful end.

Spying Monday at the end of the room, he went up to him.

Perhaps the black could throw some light upon the mystery.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ELECTION.

"Mast' JACK, um, look for you," said Monday.

"What for?" asked Jack.

"Who the lady um got with you?"

"There is a mystery about that which I will explain presently, but why do you want to know?"

"Can't tell, sare, whether um do right or wrong, but when give um poke, did it for good reason."

"I rather thought so at the time, though I couldn't make out what your little game was," replied Jack.

"Um see the lady put something in um glass, and Monday think of Buster and the p'ison."

"Yes, go on," said Jack, much interested.

"Um give poke to get at glasses, and um change your glass and put it before the lady."

"By Jove, Monday, old fellow," cried Jack, grasping his hand warmly, "you have saved my life again."

"Was it um p'ison in the glass, sare?"

"It was a deadly poison called arsenic, which causes the utmost pain to those who take it."

"Why the lady want p'ison you, sare?"

"It wasn't a lady at all. It was Mr. Kemp," replied Jack.

"Mist' Kemp dress up like gal?"

"Yes."

"Well, he drunk um arsenic, anyhow."

"Yes, that he did, sure enough."

"Him got um bellum ache, sare; what you say, stomach grubs."

"Mully grubs you mean," said Jack; "yes, poor fellow, his troubles are over. He is dead."

"Dead! Hurroosh!" cried Monday, spinning round.

"Nother of um gone now, sare."

"You are right; there is only Hunston left, and I don't fear him much, now Davis and Kemp are removed."

"Why for you pity um rascals, sare?"

"I can afford to pity them now they are gone."

"When in Limbi, sare, um kill um Pisangs no one feel sorry. We make feast and do war dance."

"Ah, but in England, Monday, we are Christians, and our religion, as you ought to know by this time, tells us to forgive our enemies and those who spitefully use us," said Jack.

"Very funny thing that," said Monday, shaking his head. "But suppose it all right since you say so, sare."

Feeling sad and low-spirited, Jack did not care to remain any longer at the ball.

He went away, changed his dress, and reached his rooms safely without being proctored.

The remainder of the week passed without any event of importance.

An inquest was held upon Kemp, who was supposed to have committed suicide.

It was revealed that the police wanted him for various things, amongst others the bank robbery, and his supposed connection with the once famous Black Band.

His distress of mind and nervous apprehensions were held sufficient cause for the rash act.

Jack said nothing.

It was not necessary for him to reveal his private affairs to everybody, and as the man was dead, he let him be buried without further scandal.

After this, all Oxford was in a state of excitement, owing to the election.

There were three candidates.

The Honorable Adolphus Tremaine, Tory; Mr. Pentarvon, Liberal; and Mr. Isaac Mole, Radical.

The good people of the worthy city of Oxford laughed at Mr. Mole's pretensions, but he persisted in going to the poll.

Banners were carried about with "Mole for Oxford; vote for Mole; Mole, the people's candidate. Plump for Mole; poll early for the friend of the people," written on them.

The nomination had been stormy.

Rotten eggs and dead dogs flew about the hustings, and Mole was very nearly smothered with a cat in a high state of putrefaction.

But the election was worse.

The Honorable Adolphus Tremaine and Mr. Mole not having gained a show of hands against the Liberal candidate, had demanded a poll.

At four o'clock the close of the poll drew nigh, the excitement was intense.

At five o'clock the result of the poll was made known.

Mr. Pentarvon, Liberal, was at the head, with a large majority over the Honorable Adolphus Tremaine.

Mole appeared on the list with the miserable small number of thirty-seven votes after his name.

There was a roar of laughter amongst the crowd.

"What do you think of your university professor

now?" asked a stalwart butcher of Jack, who was with his friends in the middle of the throng.

Jack's reply was to knock the butcher's hat over his eyes.

"Town, town!" cried several apprentices on witnessing the act.

"Town, town!" resounded on all sides.

"What's up?" asked a bargee, taking a short pipe out of his mouth.

"A gown's bonneted a town!" was the reply.

"Wire in!" answered the bargee: "there's a score on more of me and my mates, and we're on like grul against the gowns."

"Look out, gown," roared Tom Carden, who was near enough to hear this.

"It's getting nasty," said Sir Sydney Dawson, who had hold of Harvey's arm.

"Now, gown," cried Tom Carden, again, "close in near me. Back one another up. Shoulder to shoulder, they're too many for us singly."

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Harvey. "Down with the cads."

The butcher, after blundering about in a state of darkness, at length removed his hat from his face.

"Oo'it me!" he exclaimed, purple with rage.

"I did, if you want to know," replied Jack; "at least, I knocked your hat over your eyes, which comes to the same thing."

"Then you did the worstest think as ever you did in your life," said the butcher.

"Why?" Jack ventured to ask.

"I've had my knife into you 'varsity gents this ever so long, all along of my getting a black eye from one of you at the fair, and it's nation odd if we can't have a quiet slog in at 'lection time without no proctors and no coppers interfering like."

"It seems to me," remarked Sir Sydney, "that this amounts to a challenge."

"Decidedly," remarked Harvey.

"Single combat," observed Tom Carden.

"Hurroosh!" cried O'Rafferty. "This is a little bit of Donnybrook Fair, and by my faith, I shouldn't mind a go-in myself, as I am blue mouldy for want of a bating."

"Do you want to fight me single-handed?" asked Jack.

"That's my game," replied the butcher, who was an obstinate, pig-headed sort of fellow.

"Well, I dare say I can accommodate you."

"You're no man if you cry a go."

"Peel!" replied Jack, taking off his coat, waistcoat, and turning up his shirt sleeves. "I'll have a rough and tumble for the honor of old Oxford."

"Shall I hold your things, Jack?" asked Harvey.

"If you kindly will, old fellow," replied Jack.

Harvey placed them over his arm, and the crowd fell back.

"Oh, I say," continued Jack, "just mind these two rings. I had very nearly forgotten them, and I wouldn't take a mean advantage of anyone."

Then it closed again upon the little knot of university men with threatening gestures and loud threats.

The riot became general, and the hostility of the townsmen was directed against every one who wore a gown.

Jack was like a man who wields a sickle in a corn-field.

He cleared a gap in front of him and pushed onwards.

It seemed impossible to stop him.

O'Rafferty snatched a stick from a cattle-drover, and after the manner of a warm-hearted, impulsive Irishman who fought for the fun of the thing, knocked people about right and left, and broke heads at his own sweet will.

"Hurrah for Erin!" he cried. "That's a knock-down blow for you, ye spalpeen! Come on, the next of you! *Ceade mille failte!* Hundred thousand welcomes to you. How do you like that? Bedad, that's another for your upper story. Whoop! Erin go Bragh! I'm the bhoys with a yard of good blackthorn. Whoop!"

Jack's blows had fell like those of a sledge hammer, and Carden worked away as mechanically as if he had been pulling the stroke of the university eight.

But the gowns were outnumbered.

It was fortunate for our little band of heroes that the cry of "Police!" was raised.

A strong body of constables made the crowd run in various directions.

They had their truncheons drawn, and would have used them if provoked.

Superintendent Manisty was at their head.

On seeing Jack covered with blood, for he had notes-caped untouched, he said:

"This won't do, Mr. Harkaway. It's against the law."

"Very sorry, Manisty; couldn't help it," replied Jack. "The roughs would have it."

"Get away to the right, sir," continued Manisty. "We will keep the crowd back; the senior proctor and his bull-dogs are on the left looking for gowns."

"Thank you," answered Jack.

Raising his voice, he added:

"Gown to the right, quick!"

Making a determined burst, and aided by the police, the Oxford men forced their way through and beat a retreat, getting back to their colleges, through by streets, as well as they could.

Jack, on reaching his own rooms, found Monday looking very disconsolate.

"What's the matter?" he inquired.

"Missy Ada gone, sir. Got a note to say think no more of her," replied Monday.

The tears came to the poor fellow's eyes as he spoke.

"This is Dawson's doing," said Jack. "But there may be time to save her."

"You do that for me, sare," exclaimed Monday, joyfully, "and save Monday's life. He die without um pretty English girl."

"If I can rely upon a conversation I overheard, she has gone to Abingdon," continued Jack. "Silly child, she doesn't know her danger."

"I made her good husband, but she not like um color."

"Better be the wife of an honest man like you, Monday, than" — Jack broke off abruptly.

"Go to the station and wait for me; we will take the first train," he added.

He was determined to save La Favorita if possible, and at the same time to make Monday happy.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE journey between Abingdon was silent if not sad. Monday was too anxious to speak much, and Harkaway amused himself by reading a paper and smoking a cigar.

He had no defined plan of action in his mind.

When they reached Abingdon, they put up at a small inn near the station.

Entering the coffee-room, Jack ordered a rumpsteak and oyster sauce.

"Um can't eat no steak, sare," said Monday.

"Why not?"

"Lost all um appetite. Never eat no more if not find Missy Ada."

"You're a flat then," said Jack, "for a man's stomach is like the tire of a railway carriage wheel; it must be well greased now and then, or it won't go."

Monday shook his head sorrowfully.

"No sare," he said, "it all over with Monday if things not come out right. How you feel, Mast' Jack, if Missy Emily give you cold shoulder and get other man's?"

"I shouldn't be like a father at a christening," replied Jack, with a smile.

The coffee-room in which they were sitting was divided into small boxes, with high wooden partitions.

These somewhat resembled the old-fashioned pews in some country churches.

Jack and Monday were situated at the end of the room, rather in the shadow.

They could see every one who came in, without being seen themselves.

Just as Monday had finished speaking, a lady and gentleman entered.

Monday was about to spring from his seat, but Jack seizing his arm, restrained him.

"Are you mad? Sit still," he whispered.

Monday controlled himself with a great effort.

It was hard to be quiet, for he had seen the girl he loved with all the passion of a first affection, springing from a pure and noble nature.

She was hanging tremblingly upon the arm of Sir Sydney Dawson.

As luck would have it, they took up their position in the box next to Jack.

All they said could be heard.

"Waiter!" said Sir Sydney.

"Sir."

"Can we have a private room?"

"No, sir; very sorry, sir," said the waiter. "All engaged."

"Ah! never mind. Order a bed-room to be got ready. This young lady is my sister, and she will sleep here to-night."

"Very good, sir."

"And, I say, waiter, bring me a pint of dry sherry and some biscuits."

The waiter departed, and Sir Sydney continued:

"You must stay here to-night, Favorita; to-morrow I will come over from Oxford early, and take apartments for you."

"Oh," said Ada, "I wish I had never left the shop. I do feel so dreadfully wicked."

"Nonsense, my child; I have promised to marry you when I come of age in a month or two. Will not that satisfy you?"

"Why not at once?"

"I cannot. I am not my own master, and should offend my guardian."

"Oh, do let me go back. It is not yet too late," she pleaded.

"Certainly not; you are only a little nervous," he said. "Besides, you have gone too far to repent; remember you wrote a letter to your employer, saying you were going to be married, and we have been seen together."

Ada sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Where is your love for me?" asked Dawson, much annoyed.

"I am frightened," she answered.

"What at?"

"Being alone in your power."

"As if I would harm you. My love shall shield you from all evil. In Scotland, it is only necessary for people to live together as man and wife to constitute a marriage. Let us fancy ourselves across the border."

"If you would make me your wife at once I would be happier," she urged.

"How can I? Be reasonable, my Favorita. Do you want to ruin me?"

"Let me go back to the shop until you can."

"They won't have you now."

"Then I can go to my friends. My father will keep me, and my mother and brothers love me. Oh, if you were to deceive me, what misery I should bring into our happy home. Father would never live to hear my shame."

"For goodness sake, don't make a scene," said Sir Sydney, testily. "Here is the waiter with the wine."

There was silence for a time.

When the wine was placed on the table, and they fancied themselves alone, the baronet resumed. "You will be Lady Dawson, my pet; think of that."

"Can I trust you?" she asked.

"Of course you can."

"I have heard of so many girls in Oxford being cruelly deceived by university gentlemen."

"There may be scamps up at Oxford," said Sir Sydney; "but you ought to know me too well by this time, my dear girl, to class me amongst them."

"Sydney, you love me — you have said so," she said, quickly and earnestly. "If you do love me truly, yield to my prayer, and let me go to-night by the train to Reading, where my parents live. You can come and visit me; they are poor and humble, but honest and respectable."

This didn't suit Dawson at all.

He would have loved the girl for a month or two in his own selfish manner.

Then he would have cast her off as one throws away an old glove.

There was no thought of an honorable marriage in his mind.

He had a sort of horror of parents and brothers.

"No," he said, decisively; "the die is cast. You have put yourself in my hands, Favorita, and you must do as I wish and tell you."

"Oh, Sydney, have you no mercy?" she sobbed.

"I must be cruel to be kind. It is for your good."

"Well, well, she said, despairingly, "may heaven deal with you as you do with me. I am poor, helpless, friendless. I cannot resist you. Oh, if I had anyone to save me from my folly, while there is yet time."

"You have no one," said Sydney, in a tone of triumph. "Lean your head on my arm, and let me wipe away those naughty tears."

Jack released his hold on Monday's arm.

"Now," he said, quietly.

Monday sprang up like a wild beast from its lair, appearing before the astonished pair like a spirit fallen from the clouds, or sprung from the earth. He exclaimed:

"Missy Ada, you say you got no friend. Monday your friend. He take you home to farder, moder, and save you from ruin."

Ada looked thankfully at him.

"Matabella," she replied, for she had learned to call him by his kingly name, "I thank heaven you have come."

Sir Sydney Dawson's handsome features were distorted with rage. Rising to his feet, he said:

"Ada, my child, what can you and this black scum have in common?"

"He's my friend," she answered.

"I'll throw him out of the window; how dare he come here and act like a spy upon me?" cried Sir Sydney.

"No do that, sare," replied Monday, drawing himself up to his full height, in all the pride of his youthful strength; "me able to fight. Two can play at throw from window."

"You vagabond," answered Sir Sydney; "be off, or I'll make you repent this."

Jack now appeared upon the scene.

Sir Sydney was petrified with surprise.

CHAPTER XV.

MONDAY IS HAPPY.

"You here too, Harkaway!" said the baronet; "but I might have expected that you would not be far off, when your black bully made his appearance."

"You will pardon me," answered Jack in a gentlemanly tone, "if I beg you to speak more respectfully of Monday."

"What? — speak respectfully of a servant!" said Dawson, with a sneer.

"Monday is my friend."

"A nice sort of a friend to have, certainly."

"Why not? — he is a king in his own country," answered Jack.

"Pity he did not stop there. He is only fit to be a crossing-sweeper over here."

"Let me tell you," said Jack, "that he can trace his descent for centuries, from a long line of distinguished ancestors."

"Who made graves for their enemies in their own stomachs?" replied Dawson, "the cannibals!"

"They have not enjoyed the same advantages of civilization that you have," answered Jack, "but I will venture to say that there is not a man on the Island of Limbi so base as to attempt to destroy the happiness and ruin the honor of a poor, confiding, silly girl."

"Who can say that of me?" asked Sir Sydney, fiercely.

"I did not accuse you; but can your conscience acquit you?"

"Of what?"

"Of deceiving this poor girl."

Jack pointed to Ada as he spoke.

"I think it would be very much more becoming in you to mind your own business."

"It is my business, since I have made it so," replied Jack. "Monday loves Ada. He is my friend. I have by accident arrived upon the scene at a most critical moment in her fate."

"Well, what do you want?"

"Let me ask her a question."

"A dozen, if you like," said Sir Sydney, with a reckless laugh.

"My dear girl," said Jack, tenderly, "would you like to return to your friends at Reading to-night with King Matabella?"

"Yes."

"You hear that?" cried Jack.

"She does not know her own mind," growled Sir Sydney.

Monday placed his arm around Ada's waist, and drew her up close to his side.

She did not resent this liberty.

"Go away, both of you," said Dawson. "Tell him to let go the Favorita's waist, or I shall do something desperate to him."

"You must not threaten us," Jack replied, with the confidence of conviction; "we are two to one."

"Am I to see the girl carried off before my eyes?" asked Dawson.

"Yes," replied Jack.

"How do I know that your intentions are honorable?"

"You can come with me to her family at Reading, if you like," said Jack.

Sir Sydney bit his lips till the blood came.

His countenance assumed a cadaverous hue.

Suddenly he fell down on

"Who has done this?" he inquired, sternly.

"It's my fire," answered Sir Sydney. "I'm cold, and it seemed to me a good opportunity to burn Harkaway."

"You are intoxicated, sir," replied the dean, angrily. "I shall send for you to-morrow morning."

Sir Sydney was induced to go to bed, where he soon fell into a profound slumber.

The next day he had to go to the Dean of St. Aldeate's.

For some time past the deans had been very tolerant of the vagaries of the members of the college.

Now they determined to make an example.

Sir Sydney Dawson was rusticated, or sent away from the college for two years.

He never took up his residence there again; but going up to London, became one of the fastest men about town, and speedily ran through a handsome fortune.

Jack did not feel sorry for him.

Sir Sydney was only one of the many examples of what living in the fast set, as it is called, will reduce a man to in time.

The time for the examination came at last.

It was with a throbbed heart, but a cool head, that Jack went with many others into the schools.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CLASS LIST.

ALL the time that the examination in different subjects lasted, the greatest excitement reigned amongst the reading men.

Franklin and Harkaway were considered as the representatives of St. Aldeate's.

It was admitted they stood the best chance.

But there were many men from other colleges who had been burning the midnight oil for many weary months.

There were men also who had been diligently cramming with private tutors.

Who could say which would come out first?

Mr. Mole was a constant visitor at Jack's room, and gave him little confidential tips and wrinkles.

Mole was a good scholar, and Jack found his help very useful.

When the examination was over, Jack became nervous and anxious.

His brain had been kept for some time on the stretch.

The next day the list would be posted outside the schools.

Day big with the fate of trembling undergraduates!

In the evening, Harvey, Mr. Mole and Carden came to talk to and cheer him up.

O'Rafferty also dropped in.

He, too, had been up for his bachelors, and he was anxious as to the result, though he did not show it.

"Another of my pupils," said Mr. Mole; "and how have you fared with the examiners?"

"Oh, splendidious," answered O'Rafferty; "they couldn't puzzle me. Putting me on in scripture history, they asked why Cain didn't spare his brother?"

"What did you say?" inquired Mr. Mole.

"Because he wasn't 'able.'"

"This flippancy will do you no good. I wish the young men were as steady in these days as they were in mine," sighed Mr. Mole.

"Me dear sir," said O'Rafferty, "you belong to a past age."

"And you belong to a fast one," said Mole.

"Bravo! that's one for you, sir," exclaimed Jack.

"If I'm stumped, it's through having a bad coach," observed O'Rafferty.

"Sir, that remark is a reflection upon me," replied Mr. Mole. "If you do not withdraw it, I will give you a thrashing."

"At what?"

"Cards," said Mr. Mole, blandly. "I think, as your labors are over, Harkaway, we may indulge in a mild game of *loto*, limited to four and sixpence."

"As you like," replied Harkaway, "But what about your wife?"

"What of her?"

"Suppose she comes after you."

"No matter, I am Julius Caesar. She has had a lesson or two lately, and I defy her."

At this moment, the door was pushed gently open. Ambonia appeared.

"Isaac!" she said.

"Yes, my dear, I'm coming; didn't mean to stop so late," he said in confusion, as he fumbled for his hat in a corner.

"Good-night, Julius," said Jack, laughing.

"Bye-bye, Caesar, old boy," exclaimed Harvey.

"Ta-ta, Mole; be a good child," cried Tom Carden.

"Oh! be jokers," cried O'Rafferty, "he's under orders for foreign service; he's got the route."

Ambonia said nothing to any one, for she had come to consider all her husband's friends as her natural enemies.

Seizing the unresisting Mole by the arm, she led him off in triumph, and pinched him black and blue all the way down the staircase, till he yelled with pain.

The next day Buster called his master early, and at breakfast time Jack and Harvey, who came out of chapel together, tried to do justice to a very "decent spread," as the latter called it.

Jack, however, could not eat.

"Will you go to the schools for me, and look at the list?" he said. "I haven't the pluck."

"I'll go and see," said Harvey.

There was Mr. Mole, Carden, O'Rafferty and several others.

Half an hour had elapsed.

Harvey rushed into the room.

Every one regarded him with anxiety.

Jack turned very pale.

This sort of thing is different from rowing a race or playing a game at cricket.

In that line of the country he knew pretty well what he could do.

Mr. Mole was the first to speak.

"Harvey!" he exclaimed, "what news? Is the list out? Who is?"

"Harkaway's taken a double first, and he heads the list," answered Harvey.

Jack felt fainter still at hearing this.

Harvey took off his hat and waved it in the air.

"Three times three!" he cried. "Give him a cheer; he deserves it."

A loud, hearty English cheer broke out, and ran through the room.

Friends came around Jack and shook him by the hand.

Mr. Mole approached, and said: "My dear boy—for I must call you that, as you are still young, and have been my companion so many years."

"Call me what you like," answered Jack.

"You are an honor to the university. I know you think me a poor, silly, hen-pecked old man; but my head is still clear, Harkaway, and I tell you that you are an honor to Oxford."

A happy calm stole over Jack's features.

He had not worked in vain.

CHAPTER XVII.

HUNSTON'S DREAM.

WHEN the enthusiastic congratulations which overwhelmed Jack were over, O'Rafferty said:

"And please where may my name be?"

"Nowhere," answered Harvey.

"By the bones of St. Patrick, it's joking you are."

"I didn't see it, I give you my word."

"It's like the luck of the O'Rafferty's: their merits are never properly appreciated out of their own sweet country," philosophically answered O'Rafferty.

"You'll excuse me, you fellows, I know," said Jack.

"Going out?" asked Harvey.

"Yes. I want to send a brace of telegrams."

Putting on his hat, he went to the telegraph office, and when in the street he began to whistle, he was so happy. While with his friends he did not like to show his joy, but alone, his delight knew no bounds.

His first telegram was to his father, to whom he said:

"Glad to tell you I have taken a double first, and head the class list. Look in to-morrow's *Times*. Love to mother."

The second was to Emily, and nearly in the same words, though he added:

"We shall soon be happy now, my own; as I shall leave Oxford at the end of the term, and then you have only to name the day."

As he was leaving the telegraph office, he met the superintendent of the Oxford police.

"Good-day, Mr. Harkaway. I was just coming up to you. Beg to congratulate you."

"About what?" asked Jack, modestly; affecting to misunderstand him.

"Your success in the schools."

"When did you hear it?"

"Oh, it's always put about directly, and by this time it is known all over Oxford."

"Thank you, Ministy," replied Jack; "I did my best. My maxim is this: if a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well."

"May I offer you a glass of wine, sir," he said.

"I will accept one with pleasure; but why were you coming up to me?"

"I'll tell you presently," answered Ministy.

They turned into the "Mitre," and the superintendent ordered two glasses of sherry.

"Now, sir," he said, "I am going to surprise you."

"Fire away," replied Jack; "I like a little excitement now and then."

"You know a price has been set on Hunston?"

"A reward of fifty pounds, isn't it?"

"Exactly; and I have received information from the London police which I am disposed to act upon."

"What is it?"

"My telegram from Scotland Yard describes a man who answers Hunston to a T."

"Is he in London?"

"Yes," replied Ministy. "The fellow, if he is Hunston, is living in a low part of Shadwell, waiting to get off in a ship now loading in the docks."

"Where is she bound?" asked Jack.

"That I do not know; details are wanting. What I want to ask you is this: will you come with me to identify this Hunston, as you know him better than any one else?"

"Well," said Jack, "it is a nasty sort of business. I don't half like turning policeman. No offense to you, Ministy."

"Certainly not, sir; you are a gentleman and I am a thief-taker: every man to his trade."

"On consideration, I think I shall be furthering the ends of justice if I go with you," said Jack.

"And more than that: if he gets fifteen years or becomes a 'lifer,' you will be rid of a dangerous and sleepless enemy who, from what I know of recent events in your history, Mr. Harkaway, has done you as much harm as one man can do another."

"Quite right," replied Jack, thinking of the cave: he deserves no mercy at my hands. When do you start?"

"This afternoon, by the 2:30."

"Very well. I will order my scout to pack my bag, get leave, and meet you at the station."

"That's settled; good-bye, sir, for the present," said Ministy. "I must run now, as I have a lot of things to do between this and then."

We will leave Harkaway and Ministy to travel to London, to act upon the information received from the London police, and visit Hunston in his lair.

We can call it nothing else than a lair, for it was a veritable den.

He had sought the lowest part of the riverside below Wapping, amongst foreign sailors and abandoned women, thieves and wretches of every description.

The police were after him.

He had heard of the reward offered for him, and feared that he would be severely punished if caught.

Death was preferable to penal servitude to a man like Hunston.

He intended to get away to some foreign country with his plunder.

This he kept sewed up in the lining of his waistcoat.

It amounted to several thousand pounds.

So it was not from necessity that he lived in filth and squalor.

On the evening of the day when Harkaway and Ministy left Oxford to look for him, Hunston was low and nervous.

His instinct warned him of approaching danger.

He had been feverish and restless all day.

Towards four o'clock he went to a cookshop and had a sixpenny plate of meat.

Returning to his room—for he had only one—he threw himself on the dirty bed and smoked a short clay pipe.

That night at half-past seven o'clock, a ship was to sail for Spain.

In her he had taken a passage.

He selected Spain as a country to stay in for a while, because there is no extradition treaty between the English and the Spaniards.

After a time the pipe slipped from Hunston's hand, and he fell asleep.

He had a dream.

His wandering mind called him to the island where he had been wrecked with Mr. Mole, Harvey, and Maple.

The unfortunate boy who had become bad owing to Hunston's evil example.

He fancied he was standing by his grave.

That grave which Jack had ornamented by a small wooden cross.

He thought he saw the little fellow lying stiff and cold on the ground, just as he was when the Pisangs killed him.

Suddenly Maple rose up, and in a sepulchral voice, said to Hunston:

"You have brought me to this—your turn will come."

Then an old man came by, and looking at the corpse, raised his arm threateningly against Hunston.

After him came a troop of brothers and sisters.

Mr. Mole, forgetting that he was balancing himself on one leg, essayed to take a step without placing down the one he had raised, and fell all of a heap into the fender.

Such a clatter he made as he sent the tongs one way, the shovel another, and the poker springing into the middle of the room.

Mr. Mole threw his legs on to the hearthrug with some difficulty.

Neither O'Rafferty, Carden or Harvey could assist him to his feet for laughing.

"I wish Jack was here to see him," said Harvey.

"Get up," cried O'Rafferty. "What do you want to be kicking like a black beetle for! Blue murder! but it's burnt you'll be if you stay there much longer."

At this moment a hot coal fell out of the fire on to Mole's hair.

In a moment it was in a blaze.

"Murder! fire!" cried Mole, springing to his feet.

"Put me out! put me out!"

Carden rubbed his hands over Mole's hair, and extinguished the flames.

"I'll put you out, you good-for-nothing, bad man," cried a voice, and Ambonia, flushed with rage, entered the room.

The sound of that voice seemed to partially sober Mole.

His face turned white.

"What did you get drunk again for?" shrieked Ambonia; "look at your hair."

Mr. Mole looked from one to another, and finally rested his bleared eyes on his dusky wife.

"You good-for-nothing, bad man," cried Ambonia, "only look at yourself."

"My dear," said Mr. Mole, staggering backwards, "I can't spare time to look at myself, all I can do is to look at you."

"Don't look at me," shrieked Ambonia, "or I shall forget myself," and she worked her fingers nervously.

"Forget yourself," said Mr. Mole, with an imbecile grin. "No fear of that, only wish you'd forget yourself."

"What's that you say?" she asked.

"Nothing, my dear. Hadn't you better go home and look after the children. We can do without you."

"You can, can you, Mr. Mole?" asked Ambonia, in a tone full of suppressed rage.

"Of course, we can; can't we, my friends?"

And Mr. Mole turned appealingly to the young men, who found it difficult to suppress their laughter.

But neither answered.

Ambonia glared angrily around the apartment.

Then she turned to her husband.

"Mr. Mole!" she said.

"Well, Mrs. Mole?" he replied.

"Go home, sir."

"Eh?" said Mole.

"Go home."

"Did you speak to me, ma'am?"

"I did, and you better do as I say," cried the lady.

"Then I shan't," said Mole, thrusting his hands deep into his trouser pockets, and glaring at his wife. "If I do may I?"

Mr. Mole did not get any further.

Before he could finish the sentence, Mrs. Mole had seized him by the hair and the collar of his coat, and was shaking him unmercifully.

"Do-do-don't," cried Mr. Mole. "You-you'll make me bald."

"Be aisy, me darling," said O'Rafferty. "Sure 'an that's not the way to serve your husband."

"Mind um own bissess," said Ambonia, "if you don't, um serve you the same."

This threat called forth a peal of laughter from Harvey and Tom Carden.

"It's meself as would be sorry to offend a lady," said O'Rafferty. "But, by the howly poker, I should be after dropping you out of the window if you attempted it."

"Just try him, my dear," said Mole, "I wish you would let go of me, and give O'Rafferty a chance of becoming the best friend I ever had."

"Come on, me darling," said the young Irishman, as he turned and opened the window, "and I'll drop you out nately on to the stones."

Ambonia only scowled at him, and shook Mole more furiously.

"Come home, you sare," she said.

"Shan't," said Mole. "Don't order me about. I'm master, and I won't be put down by you."

"That's right," said Harvey. "Bravo, Mole!"

"What for you encourage my husband to defy me?" cried Ambonia.

"Don't be henpecked any longer, Mole," said Carden.

"If she won't know her place just tache it to her," put in O'Rafferty.

Ambonia, still holding her staggering husband, turned upon them.

"You bad lot," she hissed through her clenched teeth, "I like to kill you all."

"And eat us as well," said O'Rafferty. "Bedad, but it's a mighty tough bit you'd be finding me, I take it."

Harvey now came forward.

Laying his hand gently on Ambonia's arm, he said:

"Ambonia, you must not be angry with Mole for taking a little drop too much to-day in honor of Jack Harkaway's success. Come, now, kiss and be friends."

"No, no," cried Mole. "Don't ask her to kiss me, Harvey."

"Why not, sir?"

"Why not, Harvey, because she'd bite; she's such a wizzen when her temper's up."

"Me no kiss him. Him smell of drink. Ugh! I sooner kick than kiss."

"Well, then, let go his hair."

"When I get him home, not before," said Ambonia.

"But you must. Come, now, be a reasonable woman, Ambonia; let go."

"I won't," said Ambonia, in a determined voice.

And no persuasion could induce Ambonia to release her husband.

Mr. Mole, who at first appeared to have lost all courage, now began to pluck up again.

"Ambonia," he cried, "you disgrace me before my friends. I will not submit to be treated thus. Once for all, will you release me?"

"When I get you home, not before," was the determined reply.

"Then, I will never go home again," replied Mole.

"Never. I renounce you; I discard you; I—"

"What am the matter?" asked Monday, at this moment putting his head in at the door.

"Come here, Monday," said Carden, "and put an end to this scene."

Monday saw in a moment how things stood, an seizing Ambonia's hands, he instantly released Mole.

"Now, you cut home, sare," he said; "Monday hold Ambonia till you get away."

Mole finding himself released, at once staggered from the room, followed by Harvey and Carden, and went off home as quickly as he could.

Ambonia struggled to free herself from Monday, but to no purpose.

He held her in a grip of iron.

Nor did he suffer her to depart till he felt sure Mole was not likely to be overtaken by her.

The moment, however, that she was free, she hurried after her husband, vowing vengeance upon him.

And so we will leave them, and return to Hunston.

CHAPTER XIX.

THREE MARRIAGES.

TAKING a coil of rope from under the bed, Hunston went to the window and hitched one end by a slip-knot to a strong iron hook.

"Hi!" he cried.

The old man who had before appeared at the opposite window came out again.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Catch!" replied Hunston, "and look slippery."

He cast the other end of the rope over.

The first time it fell short.

"Curse it!" he cried.

There was a loud knocking at the door.

Hunston threw the rope a second time, and the man grasped it.

He hooked it to a nail, and it swung across the creek.

"Is it taut?" asked Hunston.

"Ay—ay," replied the man. "I have not been an old sailor for nothing."

A violent crash was heard.

The door of the room was broken open.

Manisty, a policeman, and Jack appeared on the threshold.

Hunston grasped his pistol.

He glared like a demon upon Jack.

"Is that the man?" asked Manisty.

"It is Hunston," answered Harkaway.

"I have a warrant for his arrest," said Manisty.

"Take that, then," replied Hunston.

He fired his pistol point blank at the superintendent of the Oxford police.

Manisty fell to the ground with a groan.

Harkaway made a dash at Hunston, who eluded his grasp and went through the window.

He laid hold of the rope and passed himself across.

It was a terrible risk to run.

Jack seized the revolver which Hunston had dropped.

There were several barrels not discharged.

"Stop," he cried, running to the window and looking out, "or I fire."

"Fire and be—!" replied Hunston.

The man was entirely in Jack's power.

He could have shot him down like a rat or a rabbit.

Nor did he deserve any mercy, for he had fired upon

Manisty, who lay writhing in his blood on the floor.

But again the nobleness of his nature asserted itself.

"I can't kill him, poor devil," he murmured.

And he flung the pistol on the ground.

Hunston, meanwhile, made the best of his opportunity.

He reached the opposite house, having clung to the

rope like a cat or a monkey, and, climbing in through

the window, disappeared.

Jack turned his attention to Manisty.

The superintendent was shot through the arm, and

the wound was easily seen not to be fatal.

A doctor was sent for, who bandaged it up and had

him conveyed to the London Hospital. Hunston had

escaped again.

"His time is not yet come; but I don't suppose he

will worry me any more," remarked Jack.

All pursuit after Hunston was fruitless, and it was

supposed he had escaped to Spain.

In a few weeks Manisty was none the worse for his

wound, though he felt much annoyed at Hunston's es-

caping, and declared that Jack ought to have shot him,

or cut the rope.

This latter idea had not occurred to Jack in the hur-

ry and excitement of the moment.

The remainder of the term passed very quickly.

Mr. and Mrs. Bedington and Emily, with Mrs. Travers, came up for commemoration.

Oxford was *en fete*.

On show Sunday they all walked under the trees in

the Christ Church meadows with Harvey and Hilda.

At last all was over.

Hilda and Harvey accepted an invitation to stay at

Mr. Bedington's house.

Monday and Ada were also there, and Emily had

promised that, as Monday did not wish to leave his

master, she should be her maid.

Mr. and Mrs. Mole was among the guests, as well as

Tom Carden and O'Rafferty.

The day fixed for the three marriages was Thursday, and after the breakfast, Mr. and Mrs. Harkaway, and Mr. and Mrs. Harvey (Hilda determined not to use the title of duchess) were to start for the Continent, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Matabella.

They were to stay a fortnight in Paris and then separate, one party going up the Rhine, the other to Switzerland, and in six weeks they arranged to meet again at Baden-Baden.

The wedding was a grand affair.

All six were ineffably happy.

After breakfast, at which all the best families were present, Mr. Bedington took Jack aside, while Emily had gone with Hilda to dress for the journey.</p

In fact it was a mixture of both.

His name was Augustus Lord Darrel, a wealthy nobleman, and a captain in the —th Dragoon Guards, which celebrated regiment was, for the time being, quartered at Canterbury.

Lord Augustus Darrel was usually called in the regiment Gus Darrel, and he was regarded with fear rather than love.

Jack Harkaway had been in the —th Dragoon Guards for about two years.

His brother officers liked him very much.

The new regulations abolishing the purchase of commissions in the army had just come into force.

Some of those who had bought their commissions did not like the men who were to come in by examinations.

Lord Augustus Darrel was one of those.

Harkaway, however, was far too liberal in his ideas to entertain any such petty prejudices.

He was sure that the new system would procure the best officers for the army.

Mr. Cardwell, the Secretary of State for War, was the author of the scheme.

Therefore, the new officers who came in without purchase were called "Cardwell's cads," or, "non-purchase cads."

As if a man became a gentleman simply because he had more money at his command than those less fortunate.

Jack's room in the cavalry barracks at Canterbury was plainly furnished.

He had hung a few pictures on the walls, and put some flowers on the window-sill.

But he did not take much trouble over it, because he expected to leave it soon.

Emily, his wife, had been very ill, after the birth of a son, the only issue of their marriage.

An attack of fever had made her extremely weak, and she had been recommended by her physicians to go to the south of France.

Mr. and Mrs. Harvey had accompanied her.

Lately Jack had received reassuring accounts of his wife's health, and he expected her back every day.

He had taken a house for her in Canterbury, and when she arrived, he would of course leave barracks and live with her.

It was a great grief to him not to be able to be with her, but he could not get away from his regiment.

His first idea had been to go into the Blues, but his father persuaded him to go into a working regiment.

The —th Dragoons had seen plenty of fighting.

They had gained credit long before the Peninsular campaign, and India and the Crimea testified to their courage and dash.

It was an honor to belong to such a famous regiment.

When Gus Darrel entered the room with a cigar in his mouth and his hands in his pockets, he caught Major Tremlet's concluding remark.

"Talking about that non-purchase cad, are you?" he said.

"Yes," replied Jack; "Tremlet's been telling me about him. Who is he?"

"Son of a man who makes snuff wholesale."

"Sells it wholesale, I suppose you mean," said Jack.

"I don't want you to tell me what I mean," replied Captain Lord Augustus Darrel.

This was spoken with his usual insolence.

Jack's face flushed.

"What is the new man's name?" asked Major Tremlet, wishing to avoid an explosion between Harkaway and Gus Darrel.

"The fellow rejoices in the name of Samuel Cockles," replied Darrel. "Lovely name, isn't it?"

"And his father is a snuffmaker?"

"Yes; beautiful combination! The —th Dragoons is coming to something."

"Perhaps he may be a very decent fellow, after all," hazarded Jack.

"So might you be, but you're not," said Gus Darrel.

"I say, Darrel," cried Major Tremlet, "what's the matter with you this morning? Do you want to have a row with Harkaway?"

"I'm not at all particular."

"His lordship can have as much row with me as he likes," said Jack, calmly, "though it is none of my seeking."

"Fact is," replied Darrel, "that this War Secretary riles me. What does he want to pitchfork a man into 'ours' for?"

"I don't see any objection to the new system of giving commissions and promotions by merit," said Jack.

"Don't you? Sorry for you," sneered Gus Darrel.

"I can understand your grief," answered Jack.

"Why?"

"Because if merit is the test of promotion, you're not likely to get any."

"Capital! bravo!" laughed Major Tremlet, "you've given it to him back, Harkaway."

Lord Augustus Darrel bit his thick, ugly lips with vexation.

He shrugged his elephantine shoulders in a manner expressive of disgust.

"If you like the cad," he said, "you may make as much fuss with him as you please."

"I shan't ask your permission," replied Jack.

"Don't suppose you will."

"You fellows are quarrelling like a couple of schoolboys," remarked the major.

"Is that any business of yours?" asked Darrel.

"He likes to snarl," replied Jack; "let him alone."

"All I know is," said Darrel, "that I object to the introduction of this man Cockles into the regiment, and I shall lead him such a life that he will be glad to get out of it."

"That won't be fair," said Jack.

"Why not? Are we to have anybody in the —th Dragoons?"

"Wait till you see the man. He may not be a bad sort."

"I'll lay six to four he is; his name's enough."

"If I see the fellow bullied without any cause, I shall take his part," replied Jack.

Turning to Major Tremlet, Darrel said:

"You see Harkaway is bursting himself to have a row with me."

"Well," said Jack, "just get out of my quarters, will you? I can say what I like in my own place, can't I?"

"No," replied Gus Darrel; "my commission is much older than yours, and I'm not going to be dictated to by a sub-lieutenant."

"Sell out, then."

"Come with me, Darrel," said Major Tremlet. "We will have a game of billiards somewhere."

"I want to settle this matter with Harkaway," replied Darrel, obstinately. "He has taken the cad under his protection."

"I don't see that he has done that," answered Tremlet.

"Oh, yes, he has."

"You want to organize a conspiracy against the poor beggar, and make his life a misery and a burden to him," exclaimed Jack, "and I say I won't lend myself to it."

"Then we are to be cad-ridden out of our lives. We shall be the laughing stock of the service," said Darrel.

"Go and talk to the colonel about it; don't bother me," said Jack.

"I don't like being ordered out of a man's room."

"If you don't go"— began Jack, while his eyes flashed threateningly.

"Well!" ejaculated Gus Darrel, staring at him rudely.

"You shall come with me," exclaimed Major Tremlet, taking hold of his arm.

"Please don't pull me about," replied Darrel.

"What on earth do you want?" continued the major. "Is it a row in quarters? A court-martial would be a great deal worse than

half-a-dozen non-purchasemen in the regiment."

Jack walked to the window and began to pluck the dead leaves off a geranium.

There was a knock at the door.

"Just see who that is for me, Tremlet, will you? there's a good fellow," exclaimed Jack.

Going to the door the major opened it and said:

"It is your batman."

"What is it?" exclaimed Jack.

"Telegram for you, sir," said the batman.

"Put it on the table."

Again taking Gus Darrel's arm, the major said:

"Come with me, and leave Harkaway to read his electricity."

Reluctantly the quarrelsome Lord Augustus Darrel, captain in the —th Dragoon Guards, accompanied Major Tremlet into the passage.

"Glad he's gone," muttered Jack, breaking open the telegraph message.

As he retired, Jack heard him saying:

"Hate a cad. Can't think how a man like Harkaway can stick up for the snuffy beast with the ugly name."

CHAPTER XXI

THE NON-PURCHASE CAD.

DURING the two years Harkaway had been in the army, he had improved very much.

Every one said he was a remarkably smart officer.

There was not a better rider in the regiment.

He had grown a long mustache and whiskers, though he did not patronize the beard movement.

If it had not been for Emily's illness and her enforced absence from him, he would have been perfectly happy.

Army life pleased him.

He longed, however, for a war, and an opportunity of distinguishing himself in the field.

The telegram he had received was from Harvey.

"To Sub-Lieutenant Harkaway, —th Dragoon Guards, Cavalry Barracks, Canterbury."

It came from Naples, and stated that the sender was coming to England at once.

Mrs. Harvey and Emily were to come with him, to an estate he had bought, about three miles from Canterbury, called Burton Beeches.

Emily sent her love to Jack, and said she was much better and stronger.

In a few days he might expect his loved wife, from whom he had been separated nearly three months.

This news delighted Jack, who had been very anxious about the state of Emily's health.

His son, a boy about twelve months old, was a fine, hearty boy, the image of his father.

Jack forgot all about his row with Gus Darrel about the non-purchase cad.

Strolling into the barrack yard, he saw Monday in conversation with a slim, fair-haired, delicate-looking youth.

Monday was still Jack's valet.

He and his wife had lodgings in the town, and lived very happily together.

"Yes, sare," replied Monday, "me show you to Mr. Harkaway's quarters, sare."

"Thank you, very much," replied the slim, fair man. "Will it be asking you too great a favor, if you will kindly see after my luggage, which is outside in a fly?"

"No, sare, cern'ny not," answered Monday; "me very glad."

Jack advanced to the stranger as Monday went to the gate of the barrack-yard.

"My name is Harkaway," he said. "Can I be of any service to you?"

"Sub-Lieutenant Harkaway?" inquired the stranger, looking at a card upon which something was written.

"Yes."

"Of the —th Dragoon Guard?"

"Yes."

"Then you will recognize this card."

"Jack took the card and read:

"Mr. Richard Harvey."

Underneath was written:

"Naples. Dear Jack—The bearer of this, Mr. Samuel Cockles, is going to join your regiment. We have met him and his people over here, and if you can do him any good, I shall take it as a personal favor.—R. H."

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Cockles," said Jack.

"Thank you," replied the little man, who was extremely meek and deferential in his manner.

"Mr. Harvey is a very great and old friend of mine."

"So he told me."

"You met him in Naples, I believe?"

"Yes; my father and mother, and my sister Lilly and I have been over there for a little while, and it was owing to my father that Mr. Harvey has just bought an estate at Canterbury."

"Indeed!"

"We have a place adjoining it, called Motcombe Hall."

"I saw your gazette in the paper," said Jack.

"Did you?"

"More strictly speaking, I heard it. But now let us see what can be done for you. My servant will show you the colonel's quarters. Go and report yourself, and then come up and see me."

Sub-Lieutenant Cockles thanked Jack again, and when Monday had seen his luggage safely stowed, he went with the black to report himself.

Jack returned to his room, and waited until Mr. Cockles came with Monday.

"Here you are," said Jack, gaily. "I hope you begin to feel yourself one of 'ours' already."

"The colonel seemed a little stiff and formal," answered Sub-Lieutenant Cockles.

"It's a way colonels have," replied Jack, laughing.

"I'm afraid my name is against me, Mr. Harkaway. Samuel Cockles don't sound very pretty, does it?"

"What's in a name?"

"Oh, I don't know. There was a man named Bugg, and he changed his name to Norfolk Howard, which is much prettier."

"Have you ever done anything to be ashamed of your name, Mr. Cockles?" asked Jack, a little sternly.

"No, never!"

"Then stick to it. There are many swells, I can tell you, who would be glad to be the sons of honest men, or honest themselves."

"I am pleased to hear you say that," said Cockles, "because I thought I should be dreadfully snubbed in a crack regiment like this for having such a name."

"What made you enter it, then?"

"Well, you know my father has made a lot of money in trade."

"Snuff?" said Jack.

"Exactly," replied Cockles, with a half sigh: "you have heard that. I thought it would travel about."

"Never mind."

"I can't help minding. My father has determined that I shall be a gentleman, and cut a shine, as he calls it, and that's why I have come into a swell cavalry regiment."

"I will do all I can to put you on your legs," said Jack, "owing to my friend Harvey introduction."

"Shall I have a hard time of it?" asked Cockles.

"I hope not."

"What is the routine?"

"Well, you will have to dine at mess tonight; that's the worst. I hope the fellows will not chaff you; if they do, you and I must lay our heads together, and see what is to be done."

"Is it a very dreadful thing, Mr. Harkaway, for a man's father to have made his money by selling snuff?" asked Cockles, mildly.

"No; why should it be?"

Seeing Monday waiting at the door, Jack continued:

"You will take something after your journey, will you not?"

"A glass of wine, thanks."

"Monday," exclaimed Jack, "go to the mess and get a pint of sherry and order lunch."

"Yes, sэр," replied Monday.

Some cold chicken and ham was brought up and placed before the young officer, who ate sparingly.

"You, of course, saw my wife?" Jack took occasion to observe.

"Oh, yes, frequently at Naples. Mrs. Harkaway is stronger and better. Mr. and Mrs. Harvey are very kind to her, but she seems to miss you," replied Cockles.

The afternoon passed quickly, and Jack did all he could do to put the fresh arrival straight; settling his things in his quarters, and chatting pleasantly with him to put him at his ease.

To a shy and nervous man like Cockles it was very agreeable, on his new arrival amongst strangers, and his introduction to a new kind of life, to find a friend.

At last it was time to dress for mess.

When Mr. Cockles entered the room with Jack, the colonel gave him a stiff bow, and the other officers stared at him rudely.

Gus Darrel put his glass in his eye and regarded him very offensively.

Then he turned to some one and made a remark, at which there was a subdued laugh.

Cockles colored up to the eyes, and felt hot and uncomfortable.

He guessed he was the subject of his brother officers' mirth.

"Who is that gentleman?" he asked of Jack.

"Captain Lord Augustus Darrel, the bully of the regiment. You will find him a teaser, but don't be afraid of him. I'll stand by you."

"Will you really?" replied Cockles, gratefully.

"Sit down here," said Jack. "I have to go a little higher up the table."

Presently the dinner began, the band playing agreeably in an ante-room.

The —th Dragoon Guards prided themselves upon their excellent band.

It was unrivaled in the service.

Sub-Lieutenant Cockles looked at the fine, handsome gentlemen who were in future to be his brother officers.

He admired the graceful ease of their manner, the tone of their conversation, and their bearing generally.

He was surprised at the splendid service of plate, the excellence of the dinner, and the style in which everything was done.

But his astonishment was not to be wondered at.

It was the first time he had ever dined at the mess of a crack cavalry regiment in the British army.

No one spoke to him, however, except Harkaway, who once or twice addressed a remark to him.

It seemed as if by common consent the officers of the —th had resolved to have nothing to do with the non-purchase cad.

When the band ceased for a moment, an event happened which proved to Jack that the officers did not mean to lose time in insulting Sub-Lieutenant Cockles.

Looking straight at the young man, Gus Darrel sneezed loudly.

There was a subdued laugh all around the table.

Presently another officer, and then another, and a fourth sneezed in the same manner.

It seemed as if a sudden attack of influenza had seized the whole of the gallant —th.

Jack's face flushed with annoyance.

As for Sub-Lieutenant Cockles, he became purple with rage and indignation.

The insult was unmistakable.

It was evidently known that his father had

made his fortune by manufacturing snuff, which fact, in conjunction with his common name, had made him obnoxious to his brother officers.

This was, though, no fault of his own.

He was the victim of aristocratic prejudice. The sneezing went on all dinner-time at intervals.

When the cloth was removed, the sneezing became more frequent.

The colonel could not help noticing it.

"Really," he said, "some of you fellows seem to have very bad colds. I wish you would try to get them cured before you come to mess again."

Gus Darrel had a violent fit of sneezing which caused all the younger officers to laugh immoderately, while the older ones could not help smiling.

Suddenly Sub-Lieutenant Cockles arose to his feet.

Jack wondered what on earth he was going to do.

He was very pale, and the corners of his mouth twitched with nervous agitation.

But there was an expression of resolution about his face which showed that he meant to go through with some purpose.

Every one regarded him with silent wonder.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have come among you to-day as a stranger, but still on an equality with you by virtue of the queen's commission which I hold."

Loud murmurs arose.

"Listen to me," he continued, raising his voice, "I am the son of Cockles, the snuff-maker, and I am not ashamed of it."

He placed a handsome snuff-box on the table.

"In that box," he went on, "is some of my father's snuff. You will find it very good, and I beg leave to state that if any gentleman sneezes again, without first taking a pinch of snuff, I shall consider it a personal insult, and resent it as I think fit."

"Very well put. He's got some pluck in him," remarked Major Tremlet to a neighbor.

The colonel of the regiment had listened attentively to this speech.

He felt himself called upon to say something.

"I think," he observed, "that what has fallen from Mr. Cockles is well worthy of your attention."

The officers were silent.

No more sneezing was heard.

Even Gus Darrel, the bully of the regiment, was for the moment cowed by the resolute bearing of the young man.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW SUB-LIEUTENANT COCKLES THOUGHT FIT TO ACT.

COLONEL PRENDERGAST was essentially a weak man, and he felt glad to think that the prospect of a disturbance at the mess was over.

He knew that the Horse Guards had determined to carry out the new regulations of the government to the letter.

The army was to be reformed.

Money and position were no longer the means of obtaining commissions and promotions.

A poor man of obscure birth was to have the same chance as an earl.

The colonel was particularly anxious to avoid any scandal in his regiment.

He knew that the press and the public would take the matter up.

There would be an official inquiry, and very likely the Duke of Cambridge, as commander-in-chief, would, by way of punishment, send the —th Dragoons on foreign service.

They hoped, when they left Canterbury, to be quartered at Brighton.

This was a much more pleasant prospect than going to India.

An oppressive silence fell upon every one after the colonel spoke.

Gus Darrel was the first to recover himself. Reaching over the table, he took up the snuff-box, and threw it some distance from him without opening it.

Then, taking out his scented cambric handkerchief, he sneezed again in the most pointed manner.

Sub-Lieutenant Cockles arose.

Jack left his seat, and taking his arm, begged him to be quiet.

"It is infamous," he said, "but for God's sake be calm."

"Leave me alone, Mr. Harkaway; I will not disgrace myself," he answered, with a smile which denoted self-possession.

"Gentlemen," he exclaimed, with a sarcastic emphasis on the word, "you have all witnessed the unmistakable insult I have just received from one whom I am informed is Captain Lord Augustus Darrel!"

"Yes—yes!" cried several.

"I have too much respect for myself and for you, though your treatment to me this evening has been anything but kind or friendly, to create a disturbance at the mess."

"He's a rank cur; I told you so," whispered Gus Darrel to Captain Sinclair.

"Of course," replied Sinclair. "Those fellows have no blood in their veins, only ditch water."

Sub-Lieutenant Cockles spoke again.

"I shall find an opportunity, however, of punishing the man, who, though an officer, is not a gentleman."

This was what he said.

"My good fellow," said Gus Darrel, "How can you possibly know anything about gentlemen?" You have had no opportunity of judging."

Taking no notice of this remark, Sub-Lieutenant Cockles said, addressing the colonel:

"Have I your permission, Colonel Prendergast, to retire to my quarters?"

"Certainly, Mr. Cockles," replied the colonel.

Bowing to the head of the regiment, the lieutenant slowly left the room.

A heavy silence fell upon the officers.

Colonel Prendergast was the first to break it in a tone of vexation.

"You certainly have got a knack, Darrel, of making things deucedly unpleasant," he said.

"Why not?" answered his lordship. "I'm not going to stand the cad. He's some counter-jumper or other. Why couldn't he be satisfied with the line?"

"You know that they are putting Cardwell's men in everywhere."

"So much the worse for the non-purchase cadets. I'll bet this Snuffles, or Cockles, or whatever his name is, will wish he'd never been born."

"If he were to pull your nose," said Jack, "it wouldn't surprise me."

"Look here, Harkaway," exclaimed Gus Darrel, coloring with anger, "I have told you to be careful what you say to me."

"And I choose to say what I like, that's all the difference."

"Why don't you go and comfort your cad? We know he is a pet of yours," sneered Darrel.

"I declare," said the colonel, "that this mess is becoming a bear garden. I'm ashamed of some of you men."

Gus Darrel was evidently in a quarrelsome mood that evening.

There had never been any friendship lost between him and Jack, who on this occasion felt that he had been violent and unjust to the new comer, Cockles, who had been insulted through no fault of his own.

All the chivalrous feeling which had led Jack to take the part of the weak and persecuted at school, arose in his mind.

There only required a spark to flash in order to create an open rupture between him and the insolent young lord.

But a mess table is very different from a playground or a schoolroom.

It was only when Darrel said, "We have

more than one cad amongst us," that Jack arose and approached him.

"Do you mean that sneer for me, my lord?" he asked, with white lips.

"If you like, you can appropriate it to yourself," was the off-hand answer of Darrel.

"Then all I can say is," exclaimed Jack, "that it is you who are a disgrace to the regiment."

"I?" repeated Darrel.

"Yes. You have shown more of the instinct of a thoroughbred blackguard than any one else."

At these words, Darrel sprang forward and seized Jack in a rude grasp.

He was regardless of consequences.

His evil countenance glared with passion, and was fiery red.

Jack pushed him away with one hand, which he held against his breast, while the other was ready for action.

"By heaven, this is too much!" he cried.

"I'll let you know," said Darrel, "that I am not to be insulted for nothing."

Half a dozen officers sprang to their feet, and with some difficulty separated the combatants.

They stood glaring at one another.

"Pretty behavior this, gentlemen!" said the colonel angrily. "I insist upon an immediate reconciliation."

Gus Darrel laughed heartily.

"I didn't mean anything," he said. "Harkaway and I are not going to annihilate each other this time; it is all over for the present."

He was afraid of the colonel's displeasure, and resumed his seat.

Jack also sat down at his part of the table, after bestowing a significant glance at Darrel.

He wrote on a slip of paper, "The time will come," and passed it on to his late opponent.

Lord Darrel read it, and nodded his head in token of assent.

"Pon honor," cried Colonel Prendergast, who had noticed this, "I will put the first man who begins a row under arrest. I will indeed. I give you my word."

This was a threat not to be despised.

Although the colonel was known to be easy-going and tolerant, he could act harshly if provoked too far.

After mess, the orderly officer went his rounds. It was Captain Sinclair.

As he was leaving the room, the colonel called him on one side.

"If there is any riot, Sinclair," he said, "let me know at once, and put both under arrest."

Jack left the mess room, went straight to Cockles' room, and found him making an entry in his diary.

"Writing home?" asked Jack.

"No. I keep a diary, and am merely putting down what took place. Did I behave well?" asked the sub-lieutenant.

"Capitally. I think you had the majority of the mess with you."

"I want you to do me a favor, Harkaway, if you will?"

"What is that?"

"To take a challenge from me to Darrel."

"Absurd, my dear fellow," said Jack; "you cannot fight a duel."

"What can I do, then?"

"Demand a court-martial, to see who is wrong; or write to the Horse Guards for a commission of inquiry."

Cockles shook his head.

"No," he said. "Whatever is done must be done by my hand."

"Don't be rash, that's all," said Jack.

Then changing the conversation, he asked:

"Do you smoke?"

"Only cigarettes."

"Come to my diggings, then, and blow a peaceful cloud. I want to talk to you about my dear little wife, bless her."

Sub-Lieutenant Cockles gladly accepted the invitation, and they passed a couple of hours very agreeably together with the aid of coffee, tobacco and chess.

Meanwhile the lieutenant's enemies had not been idle.

Gus Darrel, during a walk he had taken in the afternoon, had remarked the arrival in a field outside of the town of a traveling waxwork caravan, containing portrait models of celebrated people.

After mess, he sought the veterinary surgeon. His name was Potts.

Darrel talked to him for five minutes in a low tone, and ended by saying:

"Can you do it, Potts?"

"Yes, my lord, I'll do it," replied the vet.

"Look alive, then, and I'll send you two boxes of the best segars Carreras has in his shop."

"Ha—ha—ha!" grinned the vet; "your lordship's the boy for a joke."

"You grinning old jackal be off."

"Yes, my lord. Ha—ha! I'm off my lord," answered Potts.

Half an hour passed.

Then the vet entered Captain Augustus Darrel's quarters and found five or six officers assembled.

He looked around cautiously.

"Speak out; these gentlemen are all in it," said Darrel.

"I've got a beauty, my lord," said Potts.

"Where is it?"

"In his bed, laying as natural as life."

"And the owner of the show?"

"I've got him below, only waiting for a signal to come up and kick up a row. He fell in with the joke beautifully."

"All right," said Darrel; "when you hear me whistling 'Garry Owen,' let the beggar loose, and tell him not to be afraid of giving tongue."

"Yes, my lord."

"And I say, Potts, take a couple of bottles of whisky off my table. You must moisten his clay, and I know you are no enemy to a stiff grog yourself."

"There's no word of lie about that," replied Potts, putting a bottle of L. L. under each arm.

A little later the colonel sought Darrel, and was delighted to hear that no disturbance had taken place.

"That's all right," he answered, "I feel that I can trust to your good sense, Darrel; I'm going to play a rubber with Tremlet against Forbes and Deering. Keep things as quiet as you can, there's a good fellow."

"But we mean to get rid of the snuff-man, colonel," said Darrel.

"Well, well, time will show. He will see the wisdom of exchanging, perhaps. It is a great bore to be afflicted with such fellows, but don't make a row about it."

While the easy-going colonel of the —th Dragoon Guards was, in an indirect manner, aiding and abetting the conspiracy against Sub-Lieutenant Cockles, the latter came out of Jack's quarters.

It was his intention to go to his own and retire to rest early.

He was tired with traveling and the excitement of the scene at the mess.

By the light of the gas in the passage he distinctly saw his tormentor, surrounded by his friends.

"Now's my time," he said himself.

He set his lips firmly together.

Advancing towards Darrel, he did not stop till he got close to him.

Then he took his snuff-box from his pocket, opened it, and prepared to throw the contents in his lordship's face.

"This is how I treat a ruffian," he said, moving his hand.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE "DOOK" IN BED.

ONE of those trifling occurrences which a man can never guard against took place.

It changed what might have been a serious affair into a scene of confusion and laughter.

Captain Sinclair, who was a devoted friend of Darrel's, saw Cockles' intentions.

Just as he moved his hand to throw the snuff into Darrel's face, he jerked his elbow.

The full contents of the box were cast straight in the colonel's face.

He was in the act of speaking.

His mouth was filled, and, as he gasped for breath, he drew it up his nose.

It went into his eyes and nearly blinded him.

The colonel uttered a fierce yell.

He coughed and sneezed, and the more he sneezed the more he coughed.

Very improper remarks came from the colonel's lips.

His language would have made a clergyman's hair stand on end.

"Confound it!" he said, clearing his throat; "who has done this? Perdition! I am half blinded! Pah! pish!"

No one could help laughing.

"What's the shindy?" inquired Jack, coming out on hearing the noise.

"Cockles has made a bad shot," replied Captain Sinclair.

"How?"

"He wanted to shy his snuff at Darrel, but it went wrong."

Darrel brought the Colonel a wet towel, with which he wiped the snuff out of his eyes.

Still he continued to cough and stutter.

"I am very sorry, sir; it was an accident," exclaimed Cockles, crimson with vexation.

"Sorry, sir! Pah!" said the colonel, furiously. "You ought to be cashiered, sir-pah! I've a good mind to order your arrest, sir. Pish! bah! pish!"

"The snuff wasn't intended for you, sir."

"Hang it all, sir! it's too bad. Take the snuff away from him, some one. He'll commit some dreadful mischief with it. Pish! bah!"

Jack touched Cockles on the arm.

"Come with me," he whispered, "and explain in the morning. The colonel's frantic, and no wouder."

"Take his snuff away!" roared the colonel, stamping his foot.

"All right, sir," said Jack. "I'll see to it."

By main force he dragged Sub-Lieutenant Cockles along the passage.

"Take a better shot next time," replied Darrel, with a provoking smile.

"Let me get at him," said Cockles, "I'll strangle him."

"Are you mad?" said Jack. "You've made shine enough for one night. Come along."

He got him into his quarters, and shut the door.

Meanwhile the colonel was getting a little better,

"Deuce take that man," he said; "what made him do it?"

"He meant it for Darrel, sir" said Sinclair; but being nervous, he missed his aim."

"You don't think he did it on purpose?"

"I shouldn't think so," replied Darrel. "I'm the fellow's mark, not you, sir."

"Well, well, well. He must not be allowed to carry snuff. How on earth shall I be able to play at whist? Confounded nuisance! Monstrous bore this. I do wish the government would keep its manufacturing division in its place."

"Or, at all events, not allow them to bring their manufactures with them," said Darrel.

"We shall have the son of a washerwoman bringing a patent mangle with him," suggested an officer.

"Or some fellow, whose father makes quack pills, coming to physic the whole regiment," said another.

"I do believe I shall shudder all my life at the sight of snuff," said the colonel, shuffling away.

When the officers were alone again, they retired into Darrel's quarters.

Cockles did not stay long with Harkaway.

He was more bitter than before against Captain Lord Augustus Darrel.

Luck seemed to have deserted him.

"Best to keep still," said Jack, "at least in barracks. If you meet Darrel outside, punch his head and have done with it."

"But his insult to me was public, and so ought my retaliation to be," said Cockles.

"My dear fellow, please yourself. I believe in a quiet set-to with fists."

"He's too big for me and too strong at that game. I'm consumptive."

Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"Good-night," continued Sub-Lieutenant Cockles.

"Going to roost? Ta-ta; don't forget the parade at seven to-morrow morning."

Sub-Lieutenant Cockles went to his room, balked of his revenge that night.

He shut the door, placed the candle—a very dim rushlight from the quartermaster's stores—on the table, and looked round at his belongings, which the servant had put in order.

"I had hoped to be so happy in the army," he sighed. He turned to the bed.

Starting back with a cry of astonishment, he exclaimed: "That is too bad!"

In the bed, coolly tucked up, was a man.

He appeared to be in a deep sleep.

Probably he had drunk too much and mistaken the room.

"By Jupiter!" said Sub-Lieutenant Cockles, whom a sense of wrongs was beginning to arouse, "I won't have this."

He went nearer to the bed.

This outrage was the last straw to break the back of the much-enduring camel.

That long-suffering animal can bear a good deal. But there is a limit to the patience of camels, and so there is to that of sub-lieutenants in crack cavalry regiments.

"Dear me!" continued the lieutenant: "it's very funny, but he's got a face like the late Duke of Wellington."

He took a closer look.

"Yes, he is indeed what my poor father would call the 'dook.' But how the dickens did the duke get into my bed?"

This was the problem.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A STRANGE INTRUDER.

SUB-LIEUTENANT SAMUEL COCKLES could not remember having seen the face at mess.

But there were so many faces.

Perhaps the gentleman had obtained leave, and had been dining out.

That must be it.

"How sound asleep he is," mused the lieutenant.

His anger increased.

"I will not have it!" he said; "as sure as my name is Cockles, I will not put up with it."

Raising his voice, he continued:

"You, sir, come out of my bed!"

There was no answer.

Not even the least movement.

"Do you hear me, you villain—you drunken wretch?"

Still no reply.

"I'll shake him," he said, "and see if that will have any effect upon him."

He put his hand on his arm and pushed him backwards and forwards.

"He's very light," said the lieutenant; "quite a bag of bones."

Hesitating a moment, he wondered how he ought to act with regard to the strange intruder upon his privacy.

"He must go away; he ought to—he shall!" replied Cockles, at last.

Opening the door, he returned to the bed, and lifting the body in his arms, propped it up in the passage.

"How stiffly he stands! Is he—can he be dead?" said Cockles.

Deering had been watching him.

"Come along, you fellows," exclaimed Deering, looking into Darrel's room.

They were all in the passage in a moment. Cockles was rather short-sighted.

When anything embarrassed him he put on a pair of spectacles.

These he was adjusting over his nose to look more closely at the intruder.

"Go up to him," said Darrel to Deering.

The latter strolled up with his hands in his pockets.

"What's the matter now?" he said to Cockles.

"I have turned a man out of my bed. His conduct was disgraceful, but I fear there is something the matter with him," replied Cockles.

"Good heavens! You've killed him!" exclaimed Deering.

"Nonsense! It cannot be true."

"The man is dead. You've done a nice thing for yourself and the regiment, too."

"Dear me. He seemed very stiff and cold," said Sub-Lieutenant Cockles, in an agony of apprehension. "But I declare, solemnly, I did not hurt him."

"It's your snuff, perhaps, that did the trick."

"Do you know him?"

"Of course. He is one of ours, poor fellow."

Gus Darrel walked up the passage, whistling "Garry Owen" as loud as he could.

Suddenly voices were heard.

They came nearer.

"You can't go up stairs, I tell you," Potts, the veterinary surgeon, was heard to say.

"But I say I will; and when I say I will, I will, and no error," replied the waxwork showman.

The whole affair had been arranged, and they were to divide a ten-pound note between them, given by Captain Lord Augustus Darrel.

It was a very neat little bit of acting.

"Well, at least you can tell me what you want?" continued Potts.

"Some of your hossifer gents have been and broke into my show."

"What show?"

"I'm the proprietor of a waxwork."

"Well?"

"They've been and gone and stole the dook."

"What duke?" asked Potts.

"The duke of Wellington, the finest life-like himage as I've got in the whole show."

"I don't believe it," said the vet; "all the officers of the—th Dragoons are gentlemen. They would be incapable of such a thing."

"Gammon! I know my book," said the showman, "and I've had the straight tip given me."

"He winked his eye knowingly."

"You had better see the colonel."

"Kernal be bothered. You don't kid me," said the showman. "Look there."

"Where?"

"Up against that wall. That's the dook. Think I can't tell my own dook when I see him?"

He ran along the passage, closely followed by the vet.

Grasping Sub-Lieutenant Cockles by the arm he said:

"I ax your pardon, Mr. Hossifer, but is it you as has been a-having larks with the dook?"

"I—I put the unfortunate man here; but if he is dead I am not to blame," replied Cockles, mildly.

The showman burst into a loud laugh.

All the officers who were in the secret of the joke, and some who were not, crowded around.

"Unfortunit man!—dead! What does he mean?" he asked.

"What do you mean by laughing at me?" demanded Cockles, facing him angrily.

"Come, that's a good un. You mean to say as how you didn't steal him?" said the showman.

"Steal—a—man?" gasped the lieutenant.

"Yes, he's what I get my livin' out on. He's a wax un. Tell me next that you don't know that."

The truth flashed across Cockles all at once; with a groan he sank back against the wall.

Loud laughter rang in his ears.

"Give him a pinch of snuff; that will wake him up," said a voice.

Cockles had closed his eyes, but he knew it was Gus Darrel who spoke.

Afraid to trust himself to answer him just

then, he made a rush to his room and shut himself in.

"Bolted," said Deering.

"You'll have to square this 'ere job, sir. I shall come up in the morning. If it ain't put rosy, I shall speak to the colonel. People can't have their wax dooks stole like this, not by no manner of means," said the showman.

Sub-Lieutenant Cockles made no answer.

"Sold, by Jove!" he said to himself. "What an infernal ass I must be."

The vet led away the showman, who had picked up his waxwork "doock" with great care, and the officers retired to laugh at the joke they had played the non-purchase cad. Jack had been an amused spectator of the scene.

For Cockles he felt sorry, but he couldn't openly interfere.

If personal violence had been used it would have been different.

But he had seen too many jokes played, and played them himself to take much notice of such a trifles.

"I'm afraid they'll kill him, or make him exchange," he said to himself.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN THE WOOD.

At breakfast next morning Monday burst into Jack's room, full of excitement.

"Oh, sare!" he cried, "um brought um good news, sare."

"What is it, you wild Iudian?" asked Jack. "Mast' Harvey, him down stairs, sare, talking to the colonel."

"Have they all come over?"

"Yes, sare, all come in the night, Missy Emily and all," answered Monday.

While Monday was speaking, Harvey made his appearance.

He and Jack were soon shaking hands as only old friends can, displaying a heartiness which showed the affection that existed between them.

If Jack had become manly, so had Harvey.

He was a little bronzed by the sun of Italy, and his whiskers and mustache were nearly as long as his friend's.

"Delighted to see you, Dick," said Jack. "It seems an age since we parted."

"Only a few months," replied Harvey.

"Where is Emily?"

She and Lily Cockles and Hilda are getting up a picnic in Boughton Wood, to which I am to bring you and Sam Cockles at once."

"All right. I'll soon be ready."

"By the way, how does Sam get on?"

"So, so. The men of—th don't like him, but I daresay he'll settle down, when he's rubbed off the rough edges, and fellows have forgotten the chaff about the snuff. Tell me about Emily."

"She is much stronger, and the babe is a regular young tyrant. I find my new estate, Burton Beeches, is close to Cockles' place, Motcombe Hall. We are near neighbors, and that is very jolly, isn't it, because our wives have taken quite a fancy to Miss Lily Cockles."

"It is a lovely summer day," said Jack. "Let us walk up the London Road to the wood."

"As you like."

"Have you got your trap here?"

"Yes. It is at the 'Rose.'"

"Well, send Monday to tell your man to go back and let them know we shall be up in an hour or so."

"Certainly," said Harvey.

Monday was dispatched to the hotel with the message, and Sub-Lieutenant Cockles was apprised of the invitation to the picnic.

In a short time they were all in readiness, and left barracks, walking down the Military Road, and up the London Road to Boughton Wood.

The picnic was to take place at a romantic spot known as Five Oaks, or the Gipsies' Glade.

Before Harvey's man-servant started on the homeward journey, he gave Monday a note.

"It's for one of your officers," he said; "give it him—but on no account let him know where it came from. Twig?"

"Yes," replied Monday, "um twig, right nuff."

Going back to the barracks, he looked at the envelope, and saw it was directed to Captain Augustus Darrel.

He put it on the table in the captain's quarters, thinking that was the best way to avoid questioning.

Ten minutes afterwards, when Darrel entered, he saw the note.

It was in a lady's delicate handwriting.

Breaking it open, he read:

"You will remember meeting a young lady several times last autumn. She is anxious to meet you again. Come to the Gipsies' Glade this afternoon in Boughton Wood, and you shall know who the lady is, that is to say, if you are desirous of renewing your acquaintance with Lily of the Valley."

"By Jove!" said Darrel, "this is an adventure. I remember the girl well. She would not tell me who she was, and seemed as virtuous as she was pretty. I'll go like a shot."

Six months before he had accidentally met a pretty, fair-haired girl, evidently a lady from her dress, manner and conversation.

They used to walk together, but she would not tell him anything more about herself than that her name was Lily of the Valley.

Suddenly she left the neighborhood.

Darrel was delighted to renew the romantic friendship that had begun to spring up between them.

Accordingly, he, too, prepared to go to Boughton Wood.

The letter was destined to have important results to all the personages in our story.

Jack, Harvey and Cockles walked alone together in the pleasant sunshine, perfectly happy and light-hearted.

"Did you see the news in the paper about old Mole?" asked Harvey.

"No. What was it?" answered Jack, eagerly.

His curiosity was aroused.

Anything relating to so old a friend as Mole could not fail to be interesting.

"There was a ship called the 'Tarpidon' wrecked in the Bay of Biscay the other day," said Harvey.

"And was Mole on board?"

"Yes; the account describes him as late Governor of the Island of Limbi, which he had quitted on the ground of ill health."

"Was he drowned?"

"No. His wife and family are reported to have been lost, but it was hoped that he had escaped to the shore of Spain, with some sailors, in a boat."

"I'm glad of that. Poor old Mole!" said Jack; "it would be a great grief if he were to die."

"We may see him again," said Harvey.

"I hope so. What sort of a crowd did you have in Naples?"

"Very jolly. There were several Oxford men there—notably Tom Carden and Sir Sydney Dawson, who is mad about an actress," said Harvey.

"Does Emily think of going back again?"

"I fancy so. Hilda has bought a villa there, and she declares she must run over to see an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, which is predicted for this month."

"If my wife thinks the place agrees with her better than England," said Jack, "I shall get leave, and we can all go together."

"Nothing could be jollier," answered Harvey.

Sub-Lieutenant Cockles was unusually grave, and so much so that Jack rallied him upon his silence.

"I don't feel in the humor for talking," replied Cockles, sadly.

"Why not, Sam?" asked Harvey.

"If I could only have it out with Darrel, I shouldn't care."

"If I were you," said Jack, "I wouldn't think any more of the matter. Take things

quietly, and the fellows will soon get tired of persecuting you."

"I'm upset. Let me wander about the wood. I know every inch of it, because we have lived at Motcombe Hall for some years."

"Won't you come to the picnic? Your governor and mater and sister will be there."

"Later on," answered the lieutenant. "I want to quiet my nerves."

"All serene," said Jack, "you stroll about. We shall expect you at the Gipsies' Glade in an hour."

They had entered the wood, which was full of wild flowers and honeysuckles.

Nuts were beginning to show on the hazels, butterflies flew lazily about, and the song birds made the trees resound with their sweet melody.

It was a lovely scene.

Sitting down on the moss-grown trunk of a tree, Cockles gave himself up to reflection.

Jack had not gone far before a cobweb caught his face.

He felt in his pocket for his handkerchief, and could not find it.

"What a bore," said Jack.

"What's a bore?" asked Harvey.

"I've lost my rag. Lend me yours, Dick. I've got a cobweb in the eye."

Harvey gave him his, but if Jack had gone back a few yards, he would have found his own lying near the trunk on which the lieutenant was sitting. An hour glided away.

Lieutenant Cockles had not moved from the position he had taken up.

Suddenly a noise as of some one pushing his way through the branches fell upon his ears.

There was somebody coming that way.

His mind was full of bitter thoughts.

He sprang to his feet as a tall, athletic form appeared before him.

It was Captain Lord Augustus Darrel, who was going towards the Gipsies' Glade to keep the appointment given him by the mysterious Lily.

"At last," cried the lieutenant, while his eyes sparkled with joy.

"Hullo, my young and intelligent snuff merchant!" exclaimed Darrel. "What's your little game?"

"Fortune has thrown you in my way," replied Cockles, eagerly.

Captain Darrel stared at him as if he was at a loss to understand his meaning.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A COWARDLY BLOW.

THE two men were facing one another now. Lieutenant Cockles' eyes blazed with a hatred which he did not care to conceal.

"You have insulted me!" he exclaimed.

"Made fun of my father, and got me laughed at."

"Well, yes; that's about true," replied Darrel.

"What do you mean by it?"

"When we get a man like you in the regiment, we very naturally try to persuade him that he has made a mistake."

"It is you who have made a mistake, you insolent ruffian!" cried Cockles.

"Don't be violent, my little man," said Darrel. "It might hurt you."

"Will you apologize?"

"What's that?"

"Beg my pardon publicly?"

"Oh, yes, certainly; very likely to do that," replied Darrel, with a provoking smile.

"You won't, eh?" screamed Cockles.

"Take a pinch of your own snuff, and be quiet. You are only making an ass of yourself."

"Am I? What do you think I'm made of to stand your tricks and taunts?"

"You look remarkably putty-faced just now," said Darrel.

"Villain," cried Cockles, clenching his fists.

"Run away and play, little man," said Darrel, who was inclined to laugh.

"I'll have my revenge."

"Don't be stupid. I shouldn't like to spoil your beauty," said Darrel.

"Not that he's got much to spoil," he added, in a low voice.

The young lieutenant had been brooding over his wrongs until he was half mad.

Disregarding the size and strength of his opponent, he rushed upon him, and struck him on the breast.

"Don't do that again," said Darrel, flushing. Cockles struggled madly to get at him.

"You're out of your mind. I must put a stopper on your performances," exclaimed Darrel.

He was beginning to lose his temper in his turn.

Raising his sledge-hammer fist, Darrel dealt the young man a tremendous blow under the ear.

Then, as Cockles reeled, he repeated the blow with even greater force than before.

The young sub-lieutenant fell like an ox in the shambles.

A deep groan escaped him, and he lay still and motionless.

Captain Lord Augustus Darrel watched him for a little while, curiously.

Seeing that he did not come to, he knelt down upon the greensward.

Putting his ear to his breast he listened. There was no sound.

The heart had ceased to beat.

"Good God!" cried Darrel. "I can't have killed him."

He listened again, and this time conjecture deepened into certainty.

Sub-Lieutenant Samuel Cockles was dead.

With the utmost dismay upon his pale countenance, Darrel looked around to see if any one had witnessed the cowardly blow.

Not a soul was to be seen.

The insects hummed in the long grass.

The sun cast slanting shadows through the waving branches of the trees, and the merry birds sang.

Nature did not seem to know that a young man had been brutally done to death.

All at once Darrel perceived a handkerchief. Taking it up he looked for the mark.

In a corner was written:

"J. Harkaway, 12."

Letting it fall again, he smiled grimly.

"When the body is found, he murmured, this will tell a tale."

Giving one more shrinking, shuddering glance at the corpse, he strode away.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"ARE YOU HIS SISTER?"

THE expression of the dead man's features was serene and calm.

He must have died instantly.

But who could suspect Captain Lord Darrel of such a dreadful crime as murder?

No one, as he thought, had seen the deed done.

Pushing his way through the wood, he hastened to the Gipsies' Glade.

Scarcely had he quitted the spot when a stalwart gamekeeper emerged from behind a tree.

He advanced to the body and examined it.

"As I thought," he said. "Dead! What a fist that fellow has; he knows how to floor his man. But I shall recognize him again."

Then he gazed sadly at the pale, still face.

"Poor young man! he has died before his time," he added.

A tear of pity stole down the rough, weather-beaten cheek.

He had seen death before.

But never in so melancholy a form.

Gus Darrel strode on, pushing his way through the woods, his mind ill at ease.

But in spite of what had happened, he determined to meet the young lady who had written to him.

He thought he should not be found out.

If he had the misfortune to have the crime brought home to him, he could fly.

"At all events," he said to himself, with his usual aristocratic insolence, "I have only killed

g cad, an unsufferable beast whom nobody will regret."

He had not gone far before he saw two ladies strolling along a bye-path.

"Lily of the Valley," he exclaimed.

They stopped at the sound of his voice.

He approached them, taking off his felt deer-stalker, and making a polite bow.

"Ah!" exclaimed one lady, who was fair and fragile in appearance. "You are a faithful knight."

"What praise can I claim," asked Darrel, "when I have such an agreeable end in view as an interview with your fair self?"

Turning to her companion, the young lady said:

"Allow me to introduce an admirer of mine to you."

"With pleasure," was the reply.

"Lord Augustus Darrel, Captain in the —th Dragoon Guards."

"Jack's regiment."

"Yes, I told you I would give you a surprise. This lady, my lord, is Mrs. Harkaway."

Darrel looked astonished.

"Delighted, I'm sure, to make your acquaintance, Mrs. Harkaway," he said.

"I have heard my husband talk of you, my lord," answered Emily.

"And now," continued Darrel, "for pity's sake, let me know who you are."

"You know already. I am Lily of the Valley."

"But your real name—"

"Is Lily Cockles."

Lord Augustus Darrel started back as if a shell had burst under his feet.

He gasped for breath.

His eyes started from his head, and he trembled like a leaf.

In a voice that shook with emotion, he said:

"Are you his sister?"

The unknown girl whom he had loved in a wild, romantic sort of way, was the sister of the young man whom he had murdered.

He was face to face with the sister of his victim.

How lovely she was.

How mild and gentle—how fascinating—how like a little blue violet, raising its pretty and odorous head amid a bed of moss.

Alarmed at the sudden change in his manner, Lily said:

"Are you ill, my lord?"

"No; a faintness, that is all. It will soon go off," he replied.

"The heat of the weather, perhaps?"

"My little friend has surprised you," said Emily. "I have no doubt you thought it very wrong of Miss Cockles to talk to you last autumn, when you used to meet out of doors.

"Oh, no."

"Yes, you must have thought so. What did you take her for? Some little milliner?"

"One couldn't take Miss Cockles for anything but what she is," said he.

"And what's that?"

"A lady."

"Now you are paying me compliments," said Lily, smiling.

He had not known until now how much he cared for her.

Love was awakening in his heart.

Yes; he loved the pretty sister of the "non-purchase cad," whom he had slain as Cain slew Abel, but half an hour before.

What would he not have given now to recall him to life?

But alas! regrets were useless.

He was sleeping his last sleep on the flower-strewn sward of the wood.

"I can tell you that Lily was quite ashamed of herself, and she would not have made herself known to you if I had not persuaded her," said Emily.

"Why, may I ask?" said Darrel.

"Because we have heard you are a dreadful tease."

"Indeed!"

"And terribly aristocratic."

"Really!"

"Lily's brother joined your regiment yesterday, and we thought, if we could gain you over to our cause, you would not torment him."

"Why should I?"

"His father made his money in trade, you know," continued Emily.

"Will you promise to protect him for—
for my sake?" asked Lily.

She looked up imploringly into his face.

"Certainly," he answered, in a sepulchral, stony voice.

The poor boy wanted no protection now.

He, unfortunate lad, was with the angels.

"Will you join our picnic, my lord?" continued Emily.

"Kindly excuse me; I must go on," he answered.

"Oh, how unfortunate!"

"Another time, thank you."

"At all events," said Lily, "I may consider it settled that you will look after my brother?"

"Yes," he gasped.

"Thanks, very much. I shall be so grateful," said Lily, gushingly.

Raising his deerstalker again, he said something incoherently, and rushed away.

"How strange he is in his manner to-day, so different to what he used to be," remarked Lily.

"Perhaps knowing who you are, and seeing two ladies instead of one, frightened him," said Emily.

"Very likely. Men are strange creatures. The bigger they are the more shy they are of little women."

"Well," said Emily, "we will just stroll on a little further, and then work our way around to the Gipsies' Glade, or we shall be missed."

"As you like, dear. Is he not handsome?" asked Lily, in an abstracted manner.

"Why," said Emily, laughing, "I do believe you are in love with Captain Darrel."

"I never saw any one I liked so much, and yet—"

She broke off abruptly.

"What?"

"There is something about him which terrifies me at times."

The ladies walked on in silence for some minutes.

When they arrived at the glade they found every one waiting for them.

The lunch was spread out upon the grass.

Pigeon pies, chickens, hams, tongues, jellies and tarts were flanked by bottles of champagne, sherry, lemonade, brandy, soda water and beer.

In a moment Emily was clasped in Jack's manly embrace.

"My darling!" he cried.

Their lips met in a sweet caress.

The jovial party enjoyed themselves until the sun sank to rest in the burning west.

Old Cockles, as every one called him, was in his best humor.

He proposed everybody's health.

There was only one drawback to the general hilarity.

Sub-Lieutenant Cockles did not appear.

Jack and Harvey said they had left him in the woods, rather silent and moody.

It was generally supposed that he could not find his way.

"Never mind," said the snuff-maker. "He was always a queer lad. He'll turn up somewhere."

"Perhaps he has gone back to the barracks," observed Jack.

"Let him be," said old Cockles, "and take a pinch of my snuff."

He handed his box around.

"It is Prince's Mixture," answered Cockles. "Shall I tell you how it got that name?"

"If you please," said Jack.

"When I was young I was poor. I kept a little shop, and tried to save by squeezing out a little snuff from each paper after I'd weighed it. All this I mixed together. One day I tried the mixture, and it was uncommon good. I sent a sample to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George the Fourth. He liked it too."

"He gave me an order for a lot, and I called it Prince's Mixture by permission. That made my fortune. Ha, ha! Success hangs on trifles, eh?"

As old Cockles finished speaking, a tiny shriek broke from Lily.

"What is the matter?" asked Jack. "Wasps?"

She made no answer.

"Snakes?" he continued. "Don't say it's snakes."

She pointed with her hand, and all followed with their eyes the direction she indicated.

An oppression, as of death, fell upon every one.

Each voice was hushed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FINDING THE BODY.

FOUR men, looking like laborers going home from their work, appeared.

They carried between them a body.

From the listless way in which the head, arms and legs hung down, it was easy to see it was a corpse.

"What's this?" asked Cockles, rising hurriedly.

He advanced to the men.

Jack and Harvey followed him.

When Mr. Cockles's eyes fell upon the countenance of the dead man, his knees seemed to give way under him.

He took another look.

Then a great cry broke from him, such as comes from a strong man in the prime of his health and strength, when some astounding grief overwhelms him.

"My boy!" he cried. "My boy!"

Jack was equally affected.

But he was more calm and collected.

"Put down the body," he said "and tell us where and how you found it."

The men told their simple tale plainly.

They were returning from work, and cut through the wood, as it was their shortest way home.

When two-thirds through they came upon the body, and thought they ought to take it to the nearest police-station.

"Who has done this?" screamed Mr. Cockles, fiercely. "I will have blood for blood! Oh, my poor boy! my darling! the support and comfort of my age!"

He sank on his knees by the side of the body.

It was now cold and rigid.

"We found this handkerchief near the place, sir," said one of the working men.

Old Cockles seized the handkerchief and looked at it.

"There be a name in the corner," continued the man.

Springing up, the bereaved father grasped Jack by the collar.

"This is your doing!" he said.

"Mine! What do you mean?" asked Jack, indignantly.

"Look! Your name is here. This is your property. You must have dropped it on the spot."

"Harvey will tell you that I have not been out of his sight."

"Yes," said Harvey; "I and Harkaway have been together all day."

"Never mind. This shall be investigated. I will have blood for blood!" cried the old man, doggedly.

He kept the handkerchief tightly clutched in his hand.

Instead of fainting or going into hysterics, Lily was wonderfully calm and self-possessed.

She had become pale as the flower from which she took her name.

Her slender form shivered and shook with the tremulous motion of a leaf agitated by the wind.

Walking towards the spot, she said:

"Mr. Harkaway is not guilty."

"Back, girl!" cried her father. "What can you know about it?"

"I see as with a second sight, and the murderer of my brother is not here."

Then she fell forward insensible.

Emily at once threw herself on her knees, and tried to restore her.

She, too, received a terrible shock.

Her mind recalled the interview they had had with Captain Darrel.

She remembered his agitation and abrupt departure.

Nor did she forget the peculiar tone in which he said:

"Are you his sister?"

"Jack, dear," she said, looking up from her recumbent position.

"Yes, Emily," he answered.

"Go back to Canterbury with these men. Do not mind Mr. Cockles; he is not himself now. All will be clear soon."

"God grant it," answered Jack.

"Look after him," said Mr. Cockles, pointing to Jack. "He is a prisoner; I give him in charge. Were he ten times my friend, I would not forget it. The slayer of my son shall be judged, and I will have blood for blood."

"Take him up again," said Jack; "we will all go to Canterbury. Harvey, come with me. Tell the servants to see to my wife and Lily."

Harvey gave the necessary directions.

The rustics took up the corpse again, and began to wind their melancholy way through the wood.

Jack followed more as a mourner than anything else.

Behind him walked, with lynx-like, watchful eye, the father, who in his turn was followed by Harvey.

He had only known the young man four-and-twenty hours.

Yet he was deeply shocked at his fate.

When they got into the London Road, Harvey put himself by Jack's side.

"Awfully sad thing, this," he said.

"Isn't it?" replied Jack, thoughtfully.

"Old Cockles has gone mad."

"Clean off his head," answered Jack.

"I wonder who did it."

"I can't imagine. It seems to have been done by a blow on the head, though I can see no blood."

"A doctor will settle that."

"Awkward for the regiment," said Jack.

"Deucedly awkward."

"I began to like the young fellow; there was a lot of stuff in him."

"So I thought," replied Harvey. "Sorry for his poor sister."

They relapsed into silence.

A crowd began to follow them, which increased to a mob when they reached the town.

"Shall we take him into the barrack yard?" said Jack.

"Yes—yes," cried Mr. Cockles, who overheard the question. "Go to headquarters first."

The sentry saluted his officer, and allowed them to pass.

Then the gate was shut and the mob kept outside.

"Send for the colonel," shouted Mr. Cockles, "my son has been murdered."

A knot of soldiery gathered around curiously.

"Stand back!" exclaimed Jack.

The men respectfully retired to a distance.

In a short time Colonel Prendergast was in attendance.

"What is this?" he asked. "God bless me! Sub-Lieutenant Cockles dead?"

"Yes," replied the father, whose madness increased every moment.

"How did it happen?"

"He has been murdered in Boughton Wood. I was a fool to put him in your regiment. I might have known he was not good enough for your empty-headed fops who call themselves swells. But I will have blood for blood."

"Do you suspect anybody?"

"I do. I charge Lieutenant Harkaway with the crime."

"But, if I recollect aright, Mr. Harkaway

was the friend of the deceased gentleman," said Colonel Prendergast.

"Friend or no friend, I charge him. His handkerchief was found on the spot. Lock him up."

"I cannot act without further information; let the police be sent for."

"Do you mean to let him escape?" screamed Mr. Cockles.

He foamed at the mouth.

His eyes rolled in his head.

Staggering for a moment like a drunken man, he fell down in the barrack yard in a fit.

Turning to Jack, the colonel said:

"What is the meaning of all this?"

"I know no more than a baby, sir," answered Jack, "except that Lieutenant Cockles was found in the wood by these men."

"But you all went out together?"

"Yes, we left Mr. Cockles in the wood; but I and my friend here, Mr. Harvey, have never been out of one another's sight."

"Dear me, this is most perplexing. We must put the body in the guard-house, and send for the police. Perhaps a doctor will do this old gentleman some good. Who is he?" said the colonel.

"Lieutenant Cockles's father."

"Oh, that accounts for his violence. Sad affair! What can we do for the best?"

The colonel was terribly upset.

He foresaw a dreadful scandal for the regiment, and he was powerless to prevent it.

It was a sad state of affairs altogether.

Who could tell how it would end?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

FLIGHT.

WHEN Captain Lord Augustus Darrel left the two ladies in the wood, he made his way as quickly as he could to the high road.

He saw a man, dressed as a gamekeeper, leaning thoughtfully upon the knob of a hazel stick.

The man happened to be in his path.

Pushing him rudely on one side, he said:

"Get out of my way."

The man started and looked up.

His eyes lighted up with a brilliant flash.

"Your way!" he said, insolently. "Why should I?"

Gus Darrel raised his fist.

He was in an angry mood, and did not feel in the humor to be thwarted or to stick at trifles.

"Drop it sir," said the man; "you may strike a cove once too often."

"What do you mean?" asked Gus Darrel, while his face went as white as a sheet.

"I saw you kill one man to-day. Isn't that enough for you?"

"Liar!" cried Darrel, seizing him by the throat.

"Let go, or else I'll split," gasped the gamekeeper. "Let go. I say; it ain't safe to kill two men in one day."

The grip tightened on his throat.

"Let go!" said the gamekeeper, with difficulty.

A sound of oxen approaching cause Gus Darrel to pause.

"Who-a, there! who-a!" cried a voice.

"Curse it!" muttered Darrel, "some one is coming up the road—some drover fellow or other."

His grip on the gamekeeper's throat relaxed.

"That's better," said the man, drawing a deep breath and arranging his disordered necktie.

"Come on one side," said Darrel, anxiously. "What do you want? We must not have a vulgar scene."

"Vulgar, you call it!" replied the man, "as sure as my name's Newby, I'll back you don't see such things as I've seen to-day in any low quarters in Canterbury."

He shook himself like a Newfoundland dog just coming out of the water.

The cattle-drover came by with his beasts.

"I say, mate," he cried.

"What's up?" asked the drover.

"I'll give you a half-a-dollar if you'll bide here a few minutes."

"Right you are."

The drover halted his cattle, and looked curiously at Gus Darrel and Newby the gamekeeper, while he smoked a short clay pipe, which had evidently seen some service.

Newby went close up to Darrel.

"My eyes and limbs!" he said, "ain't you a caution?"

"I suppose that you want money?" answered Captain Darrel, in a low voice.

"If you mean me to hold my tongue, I must be paid for it."

Darrel saw that there was no means of escaping from the witness of his crime.

In vain he reflected, bit his lips, frowned, and fidgeted with his hands.

He was in the power of the gamekeeper.

"I can be as silent as the grave," continued Newby, "if needs be. My old dad used to read me the text about putting a bridle on the tongue."

"Ben," he'd say, when I was going on a bit, "bridle, my lad, bridle."

"This pulled me up short. He'd only got to say 'bridle,' and I was mum as a mouse."

Captain Darrel took a card from his pocket.

Handing it to Newby, he said:

"Here's my card. Come to the cavalry barracks at Canterbury to-night, and I will settle with you."

"Thank you, sir."

"Don't open your mouth too wide," continued Darrel, "and perhaps we can come to terms."

"All right, sir—bridle," said Newby, putting his finger by the side of his nose in a knowing manner.

Darrel walked away, leaving the gamekeeper in a state of delight.

The drover received his half-crown, and the two adjourned to the nearest public house, where they indulged in beer.

That afternoon passed miserably enough for Darrel.

He scarcely ate anything at mess.

When Mr. Cockles, Jack and Harvey entered the yard with the dead body of the sub-lieutenant, he heard the commotion.

His ears were sensitively alert to the slightest sound.

He was quickly on the scene.

Almost at the same time Newby was admitted to the barrackyard by showing Captain Darrel's card.

Colonel Prendergast had just turned to Jack.

"Mr. Harkaway," he exclaimed, "you are in mufti, and therefore cannot give up your sword, but I think it will be best that you should consider yourself under arrest in your own quarters until this unfortunate affair is cleared up."

Jack bowed his head.

He was too good an officer to dispute the commands of his colonel.

Newby pressed forward.

"What's that?" he asked. "Mr. Harkaway accused of murdering the gent?"

"Yes," replied a soldier.

"What are they a-going to do with him?"

"Put him under arrest."

"No, they don't," said Newby, with some feeling. "Mr. Harkaway saved me and mine from the workhouse last winter, when I was laid up with the rheumatics, and paid the brokers out of my bit of a cottage. No, they don't."

He pressed his way to the front.

"Mr. Harkaway," he cried.

Jack looked round.

"Don't you know me, sir? I'm Newby, the gamekeeper, and I'm not a brute beast to have no gratitude."

"I'm afraid you cannot be of any service to me now," replied Jack, with a sad smile.

"That's where you're wrong. Bridle up, sir; let me talk. Where's the colonel?"

"I'm Colonel Prendergast," was the answer.

"Then I tell you Mr. Harkaway didn't do it, sir."

"Who did then?"

"Captain Lord Augustus Darrel; here's his card," replied Newby.

There was a sensation in the crowd.

A form stole to the gate, which the sentry opened for him, and the person passed into the street.

"I saw him strike the poor lad down, sir," continued Newby, "and he told me to come here to-night, and he'd give me money. If it hadn't been that my good friend and preserver, Mr. Harkaway—God bless him—was in trouble, perhaps I should have bridled up and said nothing."

"This alters the case," said the colonel.

"Where is Captain Lord Darrel?"

Inquiries were instantly made.

Gus Darrel was nowhere to be found.

He had sought safety in flight.

Jack was told that he might consider himself at liberty, and Colonel Prendergast at once walked up to the police-station to consult with the authorities.

Mr. Cockles was taken to the infirmary, where he continued in a dangerous state.

The body of his son was placed in a room to await an inquest.

Thanks to Newby's evidence, there was no doubt that it would result in a verdict against Captain Lord Augustus Darrel.

All the officers of the —th Dragoon Guards were greatly shocked at what had happened.

But they felt some relief to think that their companion had fled.

If he could not be found, the scandal would not be so great.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PRINCE OF VILLANOVA.

A FEW days slipped by, and the jury, directed by the coroner, brought in a verdict of murder against Lord Darrel, for killing Sub-Lieutenant Cockles.

Great was the scandal.

So great, indeed, that the authorities at the Horse Guards ordered the —th Dragoons to go to India in a fortnight.

Jack scarcely knew how to act.

The shock of the murder had affected Emily greatly, and Jack was told by her doctor that her health would never stand a hot climate.

So he used all his influence, and got exchanged into another regiment, obtaining leave of absence for some time.

Emily expressed a wish to go to Naples.

Harvey and his wife willingly consented to accompany them, and the little party started at once for this charming Italian city.

The Neapolitans have a saying, "See Naples and die," and authors, poets, and travelers all agree in calling it the most lovely spot in the world.

They took lodgings in the *Strada di Toledo*, and Emily began rapidly to recover her health.

Nothing had been heard of Lord Darrel.

Mr. Cockles and his daughter lived a life of seclusion, and buried their grief in their hearts.

The famous *Contessa di Malafedi*, who occupied a palazzo in the *Toledo*, near Harkaway's lodgings, was a great friend of Emily's.

Twice a week the splendid saloons of the *contessa* were opened to receive all the fashionables of Naples.

It was said that gambling was carried on to a great extent in the *palazzo*, and indeed some strange characters were admitted.

But society abroad is not so difficult of entry as in London.

A fortnight after their arrival, Harvey and Jack were at the *contessa*'s.

The heat was so oppressive, that Hilda and Emily did not accompany them.

Thousands of wax lights shone in immense candelabra, and lit up the gilded, mirrored saloons.

Jack was standing in the refreshment-room, eating fruits buried in snow, and drinking iced water.

By his side was a tall, handsome man, whose

features were unmistakably Italian, though he spoke English very well.

This was the Prince of Villanova.

No one knew much about him.

He constantly appeared in Naples, and as constantly disappeared, going no one knew whither.

His residence was at an hotel, and he was reported to be enormously wealthy.

No one played higher than he, and his contempt for money was shown by the coolness with which he lost heavy sums.

At times his brow grew dark and contracted, and a savage scowl stole over his face, which became cruel and murderous in its expression.

But when the storm passed off, he was again the calm and princely gentleman.

"Good-evening, prince," exclaimed Jack. "How does the heat suit you?"

"What is the heat or cold to me?" replied Villanova. "You Inglate are so sensitive to changes of climate. As for me, I take my iced wine at the *Cafe d'Europa*; I walk under the trees in the *Villa Reale*, when the *Acacia Avenue* is snowy white with perfumed clusters. Cospetto! life is to be enjoyed, if you are only in earnest!"

Suddenly a hand slapped Jack on the back.

"I say, don't do that again," said Jack, with a gasp, "you've taken all my— Hallo! Tom Carden, by all that's odd and singular."

"Yes. Here we are again. Glad to see you, old fellow. I've just come from Rome, where I've left Sir Sydney Dawson spooning a flower-girl."

They shook hands heartily.

"Allow me to introduce you," said Jack, "the Prince of Villanova."

The prince and Carden bowed stiffly to one another, and the former walked slowly away.

"Do you know one another?" asked Jack.

"We have met," replied Carden.

"Is there anything seedy about him, or have you had a row?"

"Not exactly. Fact is, I saw him at *Civita Vecchia*—he's always cutting about somewhere—and I was advised by an Italian friend of mine to shy him."

"Why?"

Carden lowered his voice.

"They say he has something to do with the brigands," he whispered.

Jack laughed loudly.

"Come, I say," he answered, "you don't mean that you allow yourself to be frightened by such an Old Bogy tale as that?"

"Well, as for that, there are brigands in this part of Italy—and murderous ones—or rumors."

"Surely there are no brigands in the large towns and cities," said Jack.

"You can't tell where the chiefs go, or what disguises they put on. We know that the king's soldiers can't put them down, and we hear of the atrocities and crimes they commit."

"But the prince is a thorough gentleman," said Jack.

"Possibly. However, I'm not going to cotton to him. I don't like him, and you know my blunt way," replied Carden, sturdily.

"You're the same dear old Tom Carden that you were at Oxford," said Jack.

"And I hope I shall never alter. Come out and stroll up the *Strada*. We can come back in half an hour."

"With pleasure."

"I want to talk to you. Of course I saw the Canterbury affair in the paper. Darrel's a scoundrel."

"Do you know him, too?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"Considering we came from the same country, there will not be anything extraordinary if I do, will there?" replied Carden.

"Hang it! I shall have to give up the honor of your acquaintance," said Jack, with a laugh; "you're becoming quite a private detective."

"I've got good eyes, and keep my ears open."

They walked down the marble staircase, threw their light overcoats over their arms and

passed into the street, and turned into a well-known promenade on the Chiaja.

"How long have you been in Naples?" asked Jack.

"Since yesterday. If I'd known you were here, I'd have found you out before. Luckily, a friend procured me an invitation to the contessa's this evening. She's a queer fish."

"They're all queer fish, according to you."

"You'll find them out in time, but here's a cafe. What do you say to some iced lemonade?"

Going up stairs, they sat at an open window, from which, looking over the Chiaja, they could see a streak of blue water silvered by the moon, which was just visible over the trees of the Villa Reale.

"What a heavenly place this is!" exclaimed Carden, rapturously.

"Yes, it would be bearable," replied Jack, "if it was not for the heat, and the dirt, and beggars, and the fleas."

"Don't you knock all the sentiment out of a fellow. It is not often I go into poetry or romance, but I think I could live and die in Naples."

"When you have got over the fit, will you tell me what you were going to say about Darrel?" said Jack.

"Darrel! oh! ah! cad Darrel, certainly. Bully Darrel, we used to call him; it's a tale."

"What is?"

"Why, his family history. Have a cigarito, as they call them?" replied Carden.

He offered his case, and Jack helped himself.

The soft and balmy breeze entering at the window fanned their cheeks with its perfumed wings, and the gentle strains of a guitar, coming from below, lulled their senses.

Tom Carden was right, for Naples is an earthly paradise.

CHAPTER XXXI.

JACK HEARS DARREL'S HISTORY.

AUGUSTUS LORD DARREL," began Carden, "is only the second peer of that name."

"Indeed," remarked Jack. "It's quite a new title, then?"

"Quite. His father was quite a diplomatist, attached to a foreign court, and was raised to the peerage for his services. His estate adjoins my father's."

"Has the first lord been dead long?"

"About three-and-twenty years. He was murdered when Darrel was a baby."

"Murdered!" repeated Jack, astonished, "by whom?"

"An Italian steward named Dominico; at least, so it was supposed at the time. Dominico lived with a young wife in the house. Lady Darrel had just been confined with her first child, a son, who was christened Augustus. Dominico's wife was in the same interesting condition, but she died a few weeks afterwards."

"Was there a quarrel between old Lord Darrel and Dominico?"

"So the servants declared. At all events, one morning the old lord was found dead in his bed, with a stiletto sticking in his heart."

"And the Italian steward?" asked Jack, who was deeply interested.

"Had vanished."

"Poor Lady Darrel. How she must have suffered."

"No one could tell that, for she, too, was missing. Dominico, Lady Darrel, and the Italian's child were all gone when the murder was discovered."

"Perhaps," hazarded Jack, "Dominico carried her off."

"I might be so" answered Carden. "People went the length of saying so; and they said more."

"What?"

"That the baby that was left was more like Dominico's baby than the little Augustus Lord Darrel. But these things were whispered un-

der the breath, and, being merely local conjectures, did not get into the papers. Guardians were appointed for the child, who was sent to school, and afterwards put in the army. He always showed a headstrong, violent disposition, and you know what he has come to."

"What a strange story!" ejaculated Harkaway.

"Yes. You might almost expect a man to go to the bad under such circumstances."

"The actual facts amount to this," continued Jack. "Gus Darrel's father was murdered by the Italian steward, and he never knew his mother."

"Exactly. Supposition goes further. Lady Darrel is supposed to have been taken away by the steward, Dominico, who also took the real heir, leaving his own child in its place."

"So that Lord Darrel isn't Lord Darrel?" said Jack. "But that can't be the case, as he enjoyed the title and estates since he came of age. Well, as I said before, it's a strange story, anyhow."

"So it is. Have another liquor?"

"Don't mind if I do. Wonder where Gus Darrel is now? By the way, does he know all this scandal?"

"No. I think it has been kept from him. He was told his mother and father died when he was a baby," replied Carden.

"Shall we go back to the contessa's?" said Jack, throwing away the end of his cigarette.

"As you please. I could 'take the moon,' as they called strolling by moonlight, all the evening, it is so lovely," answered Carden.

They left the cafe, Jack carelessly tossing a ducat to the waiter for what they had drunk, and telling him to keep the change.

This paid him very well, as about six ducats go to the English pound.

Some beggars, or lazaroni, with whom the streets of Naples always swarm, saw this extravagant act on the part of our Ingleze.

So they crowded round them, begging, and were rewarded with a few small coins, for which they scrambled on the pavement.

The Neapolitans, like most foreigners, believe that every Englishman is a "lord," and is made of money.

Getting back to the gorgeous palazzo of the Contessa Di Malafedi, they found dancing going on in spite of the heat.

But it was a professional *danseuse* from the San Carlo Theater who was amusing the company.

She was dancing the most graceful and fascinating of all dances, the Tarantella.

Her every movement was full of grace and expressed the poetry of motion.

As she finished her performance, and glided away like a fairy, even the most *blaze* inmate of those gilded saloons feebly clapped his gloved hands together, and murmured;

"Brava, bravissima!"

"By Jove! can't those foreign women do it?" remarked Jack.

"Some small few," answered Carden. "Where are Harvey and the ladies? I want to renew my acquaintance with them."

"Hilda and Emily have stopped at home; they may turn up later—I don't know. Harvey is here somewhere," replied Jack.

Before they had completed the circuit of the saloons, they found Harvey in search of Jack.

He greeted Tom Carden very cordially.

"Are you going to stop in Naples?" he asked.

"Think I shall, now I have met you fellows," he replied. "You know, I suppose, that my poor old dad has popped off the hooks."

"No, indeed; very sorry to hear it."

"So was I, for he was very fond of me: but he's left me five thousand a year—bless the old boy—though I'd rather he'd been spared me than have the coin."

He was honest in what he said, and his hearer respected him for it.

"I was looking for you, Jack," said Harvey.

"What for?"

"You know the Prince of Villanova?"

"Yes."

"He's playing hazard with another fellow, and they are going for a cool thou. at each cast

of the dice. Wouldn't you like to come and look on?—it's awfully exciting, I can tell you."

"By all means," replied Jack.

The three young men passed through a corridor, and pushing aside some green baize curtains, found themselves in the card-room.

It was the custom of the contessa to allow gambling to any extent in her house.

But it was fully understood that the winners should pay her ten per cent. of what they won.

Thus, if a player won a thousand pounds, he would give her one hundred out of it.

She trusted to the honor of her guests, and, strange to say, she was seldom cheated by them out of any part of the blackmail she claimed.

When they entered the room, they discovered that the Prince of Villanova had been unlucky, and gone away.

Harvey made a few inquiries, and, returning to his companions, said:

"The prince lost five thousand pounds and paid it like a bird, after which he hooked it."

"Best thing he could do," answered Carden. "I'm not a gambler, but I've played at Baden and Manaco for small sums, and I'd never follow up a run of bad luck."

"What's the game now?" asked Jack. "The night's young yet; my wife won't expect me till the small hours."

"Nor mine," said Harvey. "Hilda knows we are together, and are likely to get into any mischief."

"Let's get into a barca in the bay, and be rowed to some trattoria," said Jack.

"What that?" inquired Carden.

"A sort of tavern by the sea, where you have fish suppers—fish fried in oil, you know—and then there are people with guitars, and some sing."

"All right," said Carden and Harvey, in a breath, "we will take our leave of the contessa."

"And promise to bring our wives," added Harvey, "the next time she receives."

"That will be Saturday," said Jack.

They pushed their way through the gay and brilliant crowd to the Contessa Di Malafedi, who received their adieu with an accustomed well-bred politeness.

Then they walked to the bay, and hired a boat to take them to a respectable trattoria.

Harvey and Jack being well acquainted with Latin, did not find it difficult to speak Italian, and they were both picking it up rapidly.

The row along the blue waters of the lovely bay was delightful in the extreme.

A gentle breeze blew across the sea, and softened the force of the heat.

In the distance, a luminous haze hung over the famous volcano called Mount Vesuvius, and ever and anon bright vivid flashes, like sheets of lightning, shot into the torrid air.

"Per Baccho!" said the boatman, resting on his oars, "Vesuvius will kick up a pretty noise before long."

"Is there going to be an eruption?" asked Jack.

"It is feared so. The people from Terra del Greco—that's a village at the base of the mountain—have been coming in all day, signor."

"Have you had a dust up lately?" inquired Harvey.

"No, signor, about two years ago was the last of any importance, and then, *celenza*—this was short for *excelenza*, or your excellency, a title the poor of Italy are fond of bestowing upon Englishmen—"it was fearful!"

"It was a fine sight, I suppose?"

"Fine! Santissime Virgine! it was as if hell had boiled over, and all the fires were coming up to burn the earth, 'celenza,'" replied the boatman.

Jack watched the intermittent flashes, and occasionally heard the deep rumbling of distant thunder.

The barca, or boat, glided swiftly over the waters, and the lights of the trattoria glittered round an angle of the bay.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A STRANGE LIKENESS.

RUNNING the barca against a landing stage, the boatman jumped out and held it for his passengers to alight.

He was told to wait, and the three walked along a path to the tavern, where a small crowd of people were enjoying themselves.

The Neapolitans are cheerful, lighthearted, animated, and talkative.

A smell of garlic pervaded the place, which was renewed by an odor of fried fish.

One of the waiters, with a snowy white napkin over his arm, asked for orders, detailing his bill of fare.

There were oysters from Lake Fusaro, but the weather was voted too hot for these.

Eventually some fish fried in oil was ordered, and Jack looked around him.

A man played the guitar, and the woman sang a sweet song, afterwards going round with a shell, and smiling modestly when she received the smallest contribution.

Jack noticed a man in a retired part of the room, who wore a slouched hat and a long cloak.

Whenever his eye wandered in his direction, he turned his head as if to avoid his gaze.

Something in his appearance reminded him of a face he knew, and suddenly he said to himself :

"Darrel!"

"What's that?" said Harvey.

"Nothing," answered Jack, "only that man over there reminded me strangely of Gus Darrel. It's just his phiz, and the cut of him altogether."

"One does see these strange likenesses occasionally," said Harvey, "but it is easy to tell that garlic-smelling brute is an Italian. Look at his heavy black eyebrows and mustache."

Jack said nothing more, but a little later another man, in a slouched hat and a long cloak, peeped into the room.

This man had but one arm.

He beckoned to the first one of whom we have spoken, and they went out together.

Ten minutes afterwards, Jack, who had finished his supper, strolled to the doorway.

Just outside he saw the Prince of Villanova talking earnestly to the two men.

"Ah, prince," he exclaimed, "have you, too, come to try the delights of fried fish?"

The prince addressed a few hasty words to his two companions, who quickly disappeared in the darkness.

Then he turned to Jack.

"My dear Mr. Harkaway," he said, in his blandest tones, "this is indeed a pleasure. You will have a bottle of wine with me? We Neapolitans love the night so much that we prefer it to the day."

"Thanks, replied Jack; "my friend and I must think of getting home. I am a married man, you know."

"Bah! what is that? A wife's place is at home. I love to flit about the bay in my torchlight bark, with Vesuvius gleaming red in the distance," answered the prince.

Villanova took Jack's arm in a friendly manner, and they entered the tavern together.

Carden looked annoyed at this.

"Ah," said the prince, "there is your friend. What are you doing here, Signor Carden?"

"I've got nothing to do, and I'm doing it," replied Tom Carden, in his blunt way, as he turned his back upon him.

The prince grew fiery red.

But he was a man who had an admirable command over his temper when he chose.

Addressing Harkaway, he said :

"If a Frenchman or one of my own countrymen had treated me in this manner I should have felt myself insulted."

"Don't you now?" asked Jack, who was rather annoyed at Carden's behavior.

"Oh, dear no. I have lived in England, and am accustomed to the peculiarities of your insular nature."

"Well," began Jack. "I'm very sorry"—

"Don't apologize on my account," replied Carden, turning round again quickly.

"Ah, you Ingleze," laughed the prince; "you have always your fists made up for a row. We use the"—

"Knife," put in Carden. "I know it, and for that reason I always carry a pistol; and, mind this, if I see a knife I shoot."

"How droll!" said the prince. "Here is an Oxford man and a gentleman, who has a large income, and he treats me as if I was a—"

"Brigand," interrupted Carden, who was in an ill-temper that night, and seemed bent upon making a quarrel.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the prince; "you English are so—what do you say?—eccentric. Mr. Harkaway, I am grieved, but I have come here to have supper, and you will pardon me if I go to another table, and quit the most agreeable society of yourself and your friend."

The prince of Villanova bowed, and went to an unoccupied table, where he sat down and ordered what he wanted.

Jack was annoyed.

He had not taken the dislike to the prince that Carden had, and did not believe a word of the insinuations that were directed at him.

His idea was that Carden had behaved in a rude and unpolished manner, which was unjustifiable.

He led the way out of the room, and Harvey and Carden followed him, getting into the boat which was waiting, with many others, hard by.

The oars splashed and coruscated in the water, but Jack did not speak.

What are you sulking at, old bear?" exclaimed Tom Carden at length.

"I don't think you have behaved properly, if you must have it," said Jack.

"Look here, Harkaway," said Tom Carden, "you and I are not acquaintances of yesterday, are we?"

"No."

"Then why do you put me behind a fellow who calls himself prince, and of whom you know nothing, except that you have met him at the contessa's?"

"I don't dislike him," replied Jack. "He seems a very jolly sort of fellow for a foreigner."

"All right, stick to your opinion. Your great fault, Jack, is chumming up with anybody. I'm very careful how I make friends," said Carden.

"Never mind, old boy, we won't quarrel over it; only don't insult my friend again, if you can help it."

"Do you call him a friend?"

"An acquaintance if you like; it's all the same."

"No, it isn't," replied Tom Carden, in his dogged manner. "I hope I am your friend, but I shouldn't like you to place me in the same light as that Villanova."

"Don't talk about him," said Harvey, "and then you can't fall out."

"Very well; drop him," replied Carden.

It was evident that Tom Carden had taken a strong dislike to the prince, and his name was not mentioned any more.

Perhaps he had reasons for his dislike.

Whether he was right or wrong will be soon seen.

They returned to Naples and separated. Jack wanted Carden to come in and see the ladies, whom he expected would be sitting up, but he excused himself, owing to the lateness of the hour.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE BALL.

EMILY and Hilda were delighted to hear that so old a friend as Tom Carden was in Naples.

He called the next day, and they all agreed that they would go to the next reception of the contessa.

This, however, was a grand ball, an extra-

gance which the Malafedi indulged in occasionally.

It only involved more ices, more wines, and more musicians.

The assemblage was very large, and everybody in Naples, who was anybody, was present.

Two such attractive young ladies as Emily and Hilda, who were splendidly dressed and adorned with jewels of price, were of course the observed of all observers,

Jack and Harvey liked to see their wives noticed, and let them dance to their heart's content.

Tom Carden had as many dances as he liked with each of them.

The Prince of Villanova was there, and made himself especially agreeable to Harkaway and his wife.

Emily was pleased with the Italian's fascinating manners, and danced with him twice.

This Tom Carden did not like.

He sought Jack, and found him talking to a pretty Neapolitan girl, with whom he had been walking through a quadrille.

"I say, Harkaway, old fellow, may I have a word with you?" he said.

"Certainly. Half-a-dozen, if you like," replied Jack.

"Well, if I were you, I wouldn't allow the prince to dance with your wife."

"What prince? Villanova?"

"Yes."

"Why not?"

Carden shrugged his shoulders.

"I dance with whom I like, and I don't interfere with Emily. We understand each other," said Jack.

"By George!" exclaimed Carden, "here's your wife coming towards you, and she don't look very well pleased."

Jack in his best Italian, made some apology to the lady with whom he had been dancing, for quitting her so abruptly, and advanced to meet Emily.

She was evidently put out, for her cheek was flushed, and she had bitten her lips.

"What's the matter, my darling?" he asked.

"I have been grossly insulted!" she replied.

"Who by?"

"The Prince of Villanova. Do you know him? That was the name by which the contessa introduced him to me. He claimed acquaintance with you."

"O, yes, I know him," replied Jack.

"He told me that you were in love with that girl you had been dancing with, and that you were with her the other night at a trattoria, when you stopped out late."

"The lying thief!" said Jack. "Why Carden was with me all the time."

"But you did not tell me you had been to one of those low places they call a trattoria," replied Emily, in a tone of reproach.

"I did not think of it."

"Were you with that—that lady you have just left?"

"No; on my word I wasn't, Emily," replied Jack, earnestly.

"I believe you, dear," she answered, grasping his arm tenderly.

"But look here," said Jack, "I must hear something more about this insult. What else did he say?"

"You will not quarrel with him if I tell you," asked Emily hesitatingly.

"That depends."

"I don't want to get you stabbed, Jack, dear, and if you won't promise me, I won't tell you," said Emily.

"I promise, then."

"You won't have a row with him?"

"No."

This came very reluctantly from Jack, and as Tom Carden heard it, he said to himself :

"I'll lay odds he don't keep his promise."

"He told me that he had a friend in the country who loved me, oh! ever so much more than you did," said Emily, "and if I'd only come"—

"Did you listen to him, the scoundrel?" asked Jack, indignantly.

"No; I came over at once to tell you," answered Emily.

"Where is Hilda?" asked Jack.

"Not far off; with Harvey, I think."

"Come with me, and stay with her for a minute or two, will you?"

"You are not going to fight? Oh, Jack, if you were to be killed by one of these foreign people!"

"Not I. Carden is coming with me to play a game at whist. We have had the engagement this long while."

"Really?"

"Haven't we, Carden?" asked Jack.

"Yes, indeed, we have," replied Carden. "You'll believe me, Mrs. Harkaway, won't you?"

"Keep him out of mischief, Mr. Carden," said Emily. "You are an old Oxford man, and know what my husband is."

"I know he's every inch a man," replied Carden.

"How long will your game take?" asked Emily.

"About half an hour, that's all."

"I will let you go then. In half an hour I shall expect you," she said, with a smile.

Jack and Carden walked away together, both looking pale and determined.

"Have you thought of the consequences of what you are going to do?" asked Tom Carden.

"How do you know what I mean to do?" replied Jack.

"Of course you are going to chastise the Neapolitan ruffian for insulting your wife."

"Yes," said Jack, through his clenched teeth.

"I knew it; a gentleman could not do less."

"What his object in being insolent to Emily is, I cannot imagine. He said some one in the country loved her. Who could he mean? That face at the trattoria—the man with the one arm—your suspicions—a thousand thoughts flash through my mind," exclaimed Jack, hurriedly.

He spoke in short jerks, his voice being thick and husky.

"If you strike him," remarked Carden, "you will have to fight him."

"It matters little," answered Jack; "the chance of receiving a bullet will not deter me from doing my duty."

They approached a servant who was carrying a silver salver laden with ices across the room.

Of him they inquired where the Prince of Villanova was, and the domestic replied that he saw him a moment ago on the top of the grand staircase.

Thither they hurried.

The prince was already half-way down the marble stairs.

"Hi!" said Jack, by way of attracting his attention.

Villanova turned around, and became a shade paler as he saw Jack.

"I must have a word or two with you, if you please," said Harkaway.

"I am engaged," replied the prince, "and regret that I am obliged to ask you to call at my hotel to-morrow morning, if you will be so good."

"You shall not escape me!" cried Jack, furiously. "I will expose you, brigand!"

At these words the prince uttered a shrill and piercing whistle, which came wildly and weirdly from between his teeth.

Was it a signal?

It appeared to be so, for in an instant a dozen rough, savage-looking men sprang from behind doors and statues in the hall.

They had evidently been hiding.

With knives and pistols displayed, they hurried to the prince's assistance.

Jack was about to throw himself upon Villanova, but seeing the state of affairs, Carden attempted to restrain him.

"To-morrow. Wait!" he said.

"No," cried Jack, "let me at the villain! I will strike him publicly."

He struggled fiercely to get away.

"Brigand!" cried Jack again, "I know you now. It is your life or mine!"

He succeeded in throwing off the impeding grasp of Tom Carden.

Villanova, however, drew himself up to his full height, and with a commanding gesture, waved him back.

"Mr. Harkaway," he exclaimed in a clear, shrill voice, "you have behaved in a rash and foolish manner. Stand back, as you value your life."

Jack stood his ground.

"To teach you that a Villanova is not to be trifled with," cried the prince, "I am about to lodge a ball in your shoulder."

He deliberately raised his pistol.

The trigger was pulled, and a loud report awoke the echoes of the marble hall.

The ball, aimed with unerring precision, struck Jack full in the right shoulder.

With a groan, he fell back in Tom Carden's arms.

A cry of horror arose from the ladies, and the gentlemen were petrified with amazement.

Apparently satisfied with the result of his shot, the prince lowered his weapon.

"Beware of Villanova!" he said in a terrible voice.

Then he slowly stepped down the staircase, the wild-looking men closing in behind him, and forming as it were a body-guard.

In a few moments he had passed into the street and was lost to sight.

Jack, bleeding profusely from his wound, and in a half fainting state, was carried by Carden into an ante-room.

Almost as soon as he had laid Harkaway upon a sofa, Emily rushed in.

She pushed her way through the trembling crowd.

Falling on her knees by the side of the wounded man, she sobbed out:

"Oh, God! he is dead? Speak to me, Jack. For the love of Heaven, speak to me, dearest."

But his eyes had closed, and his arms hung powerless by his side.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LITTLE COXSWAIN.

FORTUNATELY among the guests of the contessa that evening was the surgeon of a British man-of-war lying in the bay.

Attracted by the cries of the crowd, he pushed his way into the room where Tom Carden had carried Harkaway.

Addressing the contessa, he asked what was the cause of the noise and disorder.

"Oh," she replied, with a shrug of the shoulders, "it is only an Englishman who has been shot."

"Shot? What for?" inquired the surgeon.

"For insulting an Italian prince," said the contessa. "Our countrymen, signor, are very high spirited, and I am sure the Prince of Villanova would not have shot Mr. Harkaway had he not been grossly provoked."

"Did the Englishman strike the prince?"

"No, I have not heard that; but, depend upon it, the poor prince would not have fired had not his honor been attacked. We all feel very deeply for him."

"For whom—Mr. Harkaway?"

"Oh, dear no! santissima Virgine!" exclaimed the contessa, with a little laugh. "It is for the prince we feel. As for Mr. Harkaway, why really, he deserves it all."

The surgeon looked angrily at the cool, un-sympathetic Neapolitan lady.

"I don't know what you and your countrymen, madam, may be pleased to think of such a scandalous affair," he exclaimed, "but I have no hesitation in calling it an assassination. Where is the sufferer?"

"On the sofa, where the crowd is. Some one said he was dead. I hope not. How very awkward for *mio caro* Villanova; he will have to go away for a time. Ah, let me see, you are a doctor. Will you try to save him and not let him die, for—for the poor prince's sake?"

"Devil take the prince?" answered the Englishman, bluntly, as he made his way through the crowd.

"Stand back there; give the man air!" he cried, loudly.

No one seemed inclined to obey these instructions, and the people kept on flocking into the room.

"Has he any friends here?" cried the surgeon.

Harvey and Carden came up and joined him, saying they were friends of Jack's.

"That's all right," replied the doctor. "I am a medical man attached to H. M. S. 'Warspite.' Clear the room, will you? Turn all the macaroni, garlic-eating beggars out at any price."

"I can't do it at the point of the bayonet," replied Tom Carden, "but I will at the point of the poker."

He took up that useful domestic article from the fender, and Harvey imitated his example with the tongs.

By dint of great exertion, and not a little swearing, they succeeded in clearing the room, and Harvey shut the door and put his back against it.

Carden opened a window.

Emily and Hilda, who had joined her at the first alarm, were kneeling by the lounge, trying bravely to staunch the blood as it flowed from the wound.

The doctor was a practical man, slit up the coat-sleeve with a knife, and laid bare the shoulder.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "queer shot wound; bone not broken, as well as I can judge. No; ball has glanced off and lodged in the flesh. Ring the bell, please, for cold water and a sponge, and some linen bandages. You are related to the gentleman, I presume?" he added.

"I am his wife, sir," answered Emily. "Oh, do tell me, will he live?"

"Live? I should think he would. Why, my dear lady, he is worth a dozen dead men yet. The ball has lodged in as comfortable a place as it well could."

"I feel so thankful," cried Emily, joyfully.

Hilda and she looked at one another and smiled through their tears.

"If you ladies will kindly fall back," said the doctor, "I'll have the bullet out before he comes to, and then we'll bandage him up and take him home."

He was as good as his word.

With a skill and quickness that he had learnt during the Crimean War, he extracted the ball, bound up the injured part, brought Jack, who was very weak and ill, to himself, and then, with Carden's help, he carried him to the carriage, which took him to his own house at a gentle walk.

"Keep him quiet," said the doctor to Harvey. "I'll look him up to-morrow. You'll know my name if I call: it is Halsey."

"Is he much knocked about?" asked Harvey.

"Not more than he can stand. He'll lay up for a few weeks, and then keep his arm in a sling for a few more, to prevent a strain on the joint."

"Then it's nothing serious?"

"It might have been a long sight worse," said Halsey, shaking his head.

"Well, we are all deeply indebted to you for your kindness, Mr. Halsey," remarked Carden.

"You will let us see as much of you as you can, I hope," said Harvey.

"With pleasure, so long as my ship stays. Tell your friend if he asks any questions, that I've got the lead pill out, and that he needn't flurry himself, though, mind you—although I don't want to praise myself—he might have lost his arm if any of these foreign doctors had got messing about him."

The good-natured doctor accepted a glass of wine and a cigar.

Then he shook hands and departed, leaving all Jack's friends highly pleased at what he had said.

Late in the following day the Contessa Di Malafedi took the trouble to send a servant to inquire after Harkaway.

There were also a few cards left at the house in the Strada di Toledo, where he was lying.

But all the inquiries were made in a half-hearted sort of manner.

Tom Carden took a stroll in the afternoon, and heard various accounts of the affair, which made quite a stir in Naples.

All agreed in one point.

The Prince of Villanova had been infamously treated by the Englishman, and not a lady or gentleman, Italian bred and born, seemed to think that the slightest blame attached to him for the shooting.

Every one said that Harkaway was wrong, and the prince perfectly in the right.

This made Carden indignant.

"Wait till he gets well," he said, "and if this prince shows his ugly nose in Naples again, I'll bet that Harkaway pulls it, and if he can't, I will."

Harvey also went about breathing vengeance against the cowardly Italian.

The authorities made no efforts to find the prince or bring him to justice.

But his highness showed his sense in keeping away from the scene of his late exploit.

Harvey inquired of a score of people where the fiery nobleman lived.

No one in Naples seemed to know exactly, He could not meet one who had ever been in his house.

He was said to have a castle, about forty or fifty miles from Naples, east of Capua, on the rapid little river Volturno.

When in retirement at his castle, he never received any visitors, and allowed no stranger to enter.

"I'll find out the villain when Jack gets well," said Harvey to Carden, "and when I have, I'll go to the King of Italy at Florence, and demand justice, if I can't get it here."

"And I'll back you up through thick and thin," old cock," replied Carden, smiling at his enthusiasm.

The time did not pass so slowly during Jack's illness as they had all expected.

He was soon able to sit and talk.

Then he walked a little and drove in the country, rapidly regaining his strength.

His rage against the mysterious prince was fully as great as that of his friends.

"Wait till I can use my right arm again," he exclaimed, "and I'll—

"Oh, Jack," interrupted Emily, who overheard this remark, "what will you do?"

"Eat him, my dear," he replied, with a smile, not wishing to alarm her.

"You must not provoke such a dangerous man," she said, gravely. "He deserves to be punished, if you can find him, but I should leave the law to deal with him. You will, will you not?"

"Yes, darling," replied Jack, kissing his pretty wife.

He thought there was no great harm in telling her a little fib to prevent her from alarming herself.

When he grew strong enough, Monday used to drive him out with Emily in a handsome "Victoria," which had been brought from London.

It happened one day that he was being driven along the road leading to the ruins of Pompeii.

Suddenly they heard the sound of wheels approaching rapidly.

Looking up, Monday saw a man in a one-horse sort of a gig coming along at a gallop.

The horse had evidently got the bit between his teeth and was too much for his driver.

"Hi, hi! Yah!" cried Monday. "Where you coming to? Look out, you sare! What you up to? Yah, Yah!"

His warning was not attended to.

On came the gig at the same headlong pace, though, the driver, a young Englishman, tugged away at the reins with all his might.

The next moment there was a collision.

The gig caught the "Victoria," taking off a wheel, and then toppling over on its side.

Its driver was thrown out and fell in the middle of the road, where he lay for a while as if stunned.

Neither Emily nor Jack was hurt, though the shock had made them a little nervous.

"Confound the fellow!" exclaimed Jack, stepping out. "He ought to be horsewhipped for driving in that manner."

The young fellow, for he was not more than nineteen, jumped up, shook himself, winced a little as if hurt, took a look at the ruins of the trap, and saw the horse disappearing in the distance, with the harness and the broken shafts rattling behind him.

Then he turned his attention to Jack.

"Pardon me," he said in a gentlemanly tone, "but, if I am not mistaken, you thought fit to make a disagreeable remark just now."

"I only said that"—began Jack.

"I heard what you said," interrupted the young man, you thought you could take advantage of my apparent insensibility."

"Hang it all!" said Jack: you run into a man and take his wheel off, and then you are riled if he grumbles."

"Certainly I am."

"You ought not to be trusted out with a horse."

"That may be your opinion," replied the young stranger. "We will not talk about that. You have insulted me by saying that I ought to be horsewhipped. I heard you."

"Well?"

"Are you going to apologize?"

Jack burst out laughing.

"It's no laughing matter, let me tell you that. Will you apologize?"

"No, I distinctly refuse to do anything of the sort."

"Then mind your eye, for I'm going to take it out of you," said the reckless driver.

"My good fellow," said Jack, "it isn't two months since I got shot in the shoulder, and you may perceive, if you use your eyes, that I still wear my arm in a sling."

"What's the odds? I've broken my right arm, and I don't howl over it."

"Your arm broken?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"What is there wonderful in that?" said the young man. "What a child you must be."

"Why?"

"You don't suppose a man can get chucked off a trap when the horse is bolting like mad, and not hurt himself do you?"

"Well, on consideration, no," answered Jack.

"It's a puzzler to me how I didn't break my neck. But, look here, we're evenly matched, your arm's slung up, and mine's broken somewhere—I don't know where, though it hurts like old boots."

"I'm sorry for that," put in Jack.

"Blow your sorrow," said the youngster. "I want an apology, if not, I shall punch your head."

"You forget I have a lady with me," said Jack. "My wife is not well. Under any other circumstances I should be glad to oblige you."

"Don't let a petticoat stand in the way. Send her home."

"Can't."

"Then you won't fight? I shall have to give you the coward's blow," said the young man.

"Monday," said Jack.

"Coming, sare," said the black, getting down off the box.

"Secure this lunatic," cried Jack. "Don't hurt him; his arm is broken. I only want to keep him quiet."

"No, by George, you don't!" said the youngster, rushing up to Jack. "I'll have a cut in after an insult, if I die for it."

Seeing he was determined, Jack drew back, and saying to Emily, "sit still, dear," faced the little bantam cock.

"If you will have it, you must," he added.

A fight began between them, and was all the more severe while it lasted because it was one-handed.

There was less chance of guarding the blows which each aimed at the other.

Jack, however, was the stronger and the bigger.

His blows were like those from a sledge-hammer, and in five minutes the stranger was sitting down in the middle of the road, with one eye closed up and his nose very liberally distilling the claret.

"Have you had enough?" asked Jack.

"Yes; you've licked," replied the stranger. "But I don't bear any animosity because a fellow has given me a hiding. Shake hands."

"Willingly," replied Jack.

Their hands, which had lately been engaged in hitting one another's faces, met in a friendly grasp.

"That's English, isn't it?" said the young one, with a smile.

His face was convulsed with a spasm of pain as he spoke.

"You're hurt?" said Jack, kindly.

"Yes; it's my arm. I told you it was broken, and that last knock-down shove on the last peeper you gave me sent me on to it again. Never mind; I've kept up the honor of Cambridge."

"Are you a Cambridge man?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"I have the honor to belong to that university, my pippin."

"And I'm Oxford."

"The deuce you are. What's your name?"

"Jack Harkaway."

"By jingo! this is funny. I'm Walter Campbell. Don't you remember I steered the Cambridge eight in the 'varsity race at Putney the year you rowed so well at Oxford?"

"Of course I do. Were you the little coxswain who got so cracked up by everybody for his steering!"

"I'm the infant," answered Walter Campbell, with another grimace, caused by the pain he was suffering.

"By Jove!" said Jack; "what a rum go we should meet like this."

"It's rum," answered the coxswain; "but it's a rum world—everything rum. Bother my arm! don't it just hurt!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

BRIGANDS AT WORK.

MONDAY and Emily had watched this singular fight with more interest than fear.

Emily did not think that Jack was in danger, and was only anxious that Walter Campbell should not be more punished than could be helped.

"It all over, mum," said Monday, grinning. "Mast' Jack lick; knew um would. One arm make no difference to him when fight fair and not use pistol. Any way, him plucky little man. I say that for him."

"Go, Monday," replied Emily, "and ask your master what we are to do. The wheel's broken."

Monday left the carriage and went to the middle of the road.

"Please, sare," he said, "missus wants to know what um to do."

"Blest if I know," answered Jack.

"It's a case of stump, isn't it?" said the little coxswain. "Stump, and no mistake," replied Jack. "Can you walk?"

"Don't think I can. I'm as weak as a rat, and could do a good yell or two, the pain's so great. Besides, I can't see very well; you've bunged one eye up quite, and t'other's closing fast."

"It was your fault."

"Oh, yes, I admit it; but if I'd known you were Jack Harkaway, I don't think I'd have a mill with you."

"You showed your pluck anyhow."

"So did you," answered Walter Campbell. "But Oxford and Cambridge are bound to have it everywhere. I licked a lot of brigands the other night."

At the word "brigands" Jack pricked his ears up.

"Brigands!" he repeated eagerly. "Where?"

"Out Portici way. I haven't been here

long, and I always make it a point of whacking myself about a bit in a new place."

"Yes."

"I'm a midshipman, mate, odd man, anything you like on board my governor's yacht, the 'Samphire,' you know."

"Is that pretty little schooner your governor's? The one that come into the bay on Saturday?" asked Jack.

"That's her. Isn't she a beauty?"

"Every inch of her."

"Well," continued Walter Campbell, "I got out walking up Portici way, and five coves in long cloaks and slouched hats stopped me."

"What did you do?"

"Shot two of them, slipped into two more like the Tipton Slasher, and kicked the starn of the fifth."

"That's what it all come to, but how I did it I don't know any more than a baby. It was all done in a few minutes, and I put it down as a big fluke."

"But I say, what are we to do?"

"That's just what I'm bustling about."

"I can't stop here; my arm does hurt a ripper and no mistake," said the little coxswain.

"Shall I send Monday on for another carriage?"

"Do something, there's a good fellow. I'd give the world for a good doctor to put me in splints."

Jack was just about to tell Monday to ride one of the horses into Naples, when he heard something coming.

"What's that!" he said.

Monday looked up the road.

"It all right now," he cried.

"What's all right?"

"That Mast' Harvey's drag coming, sare."

"Oh, by Jove! that's lucky," said Jack, joyfully.

It must be mentioned that Harvey, having plenty of money and nothing much to do with it, had ordered a handsome drag to be sent from England.

This had cost, including the sending-out expenses, £450, and the four blood bays that drew it had cost £550, so that altogether it came to the very respectable total of £1,000.

The drag had only just arrived.

It was the first time that Harvey had driven it, and, as may be imagined, created a great sensation, such a thing as a four-in-hand coach, fitted up in London style, being unknown there.

"What does Monday say?" asked Emily.

"His eyes are better than mine," answered Jack, "and he says he sees Dick Harvey's new drag coming along."

"Oh, that's awfully jolly," said Emily.

"He'll pick us all up," continued Jack.

"I'm so glad," said Emily. "Because your new friend, Mr. Campbell, really ought to be attended to. I wish I could do something for him."

"Thank you," replied the little coxswain, pluckily. "I'm all right, bar the arm; don't bother about me please. It is I who ought to be sorry for knocking your wheel off, and I really am."

"Your horse ran away with you. It was not your fault."

"No, it was not; you're right there. The jibbing beast took fright and shied. I lammed into him with the whip, and then he showed his nasty temper."

The four-in-hand approached at a steady pace.

Harvey was driving, and considering that he'd never driven anything more than a pair or a tandem, he got on very well.

By his side was Tom Carden, an experienced whip, who was giving him instructions.

"Gently mare," said Tom; "wo-a there, ease the off-side wheeler a bit. That's your sort, whip up the near-side leader. Soh! gently all mind the mare. What a nasty knack she's got of bearing on the pole."

"We must cure her of that," answered Harvey.

"Hulloa. Thithorth, as a man with a lisp I know says, what's up in front?" said Tom.

"A smash-up, I think."

"Why, there is Jack. By the hooky, it's Emily's Victoria that's come to grief. I hope to goodness that Harkaway isn't hurt again."

"Lucky we came up," said Harvey. "Jack seems to be all serene. Who's that sitting in the road?"

"Not knowing, can't say."

Harvey whipped up his team and stopped within a few paces of the Victoria.

He and Carden bowed to Emily, and Harvey, throwing the reins to one of the grooms, of whom there were two behind, got down.

"Are you hurt, Jack?" he asked nervously.

"No, thank God," replied Jack; "a fellow ran into me."

"The lubber. Where is the clumsy beggar?" cried Harvey.

The little coxswain got up.

"Look here," he said. "I can't afford to be called lubbers and clumsy beggars; you're worse than Harkaway."

"Is this the man?" asked Harvey.

"Yes, that's the child," replied Jack.

"If you want a row, you can be accommodated," continued the little coxswain.

"I am not ambitious of anything of the sort," said Harvey.

"Then don't call people names: take the tip from me, old fellow."

"Oh, if you're on for a row, I dare say I can oblige you," cried Harvey.

"Hold your row, both of you," said Jack.

"This is my friend, Mr. Harvey of St. Aldate's, Oxford. And this is, I hope I may also say, my friend——"

The little coxswain bowed.

"My friend, Mr. Walter Campbell, who steered the Cambridge eight in my year."

"Proud to meet Mr. Campbell, I'm sure," replied Harvey. "But, I say, how did this spill happen?"

"My horse bolted," said the coxswain. "I suppose he thought I was taking it in too free and easy a manner."

"Are you hurt?"

"I've broken one arm, and am doubtful about a rib."

"And here are we, keeping you chattering here. By Jove! it's too bad," said Harvey; "let me help you inside the drag."

"I'll go with him," said Jack; "take Emily on the roof, the air does her good."

They were soon placed, and leaving Monday to look after the horses and the Victoria, until they could send him assistance, they returned to Naples.

Jack insisted upon the coxswain coming to his lodgings, where his arm was set.

Here he stayed for some time, as his father was obliged to go back in the yacht a day or two afterwards.

He was young and healthy, so that there was nothing to retard his recovery, which took place as rapidly as Jack's.

Young bones set together easy.

Meanwhile the Prince of Villanova kept in his castle, at least people supposed so, as he did not make his appearance in Naples.

As he had been very popular with the fashionable Neapolitans, he was much missed,

They one and all blamed Jack, and scouted the idea that he was a brigand.

Some went so far as to declare that his highness ought to have killed Jack outright for saying such a thing.

But Jack did not care a rush for the Italians. He kept his own counsel.

Only Harvey and Carden knew that he was determined to sift the matter to the bottom, and if the prince was what he suspected him to be, to tear the mask from his face and show him up in his true colors.

The Contessa Di Malafedi constantly regretted her dear prince.

He had, by his high play, been a source of income to her.

She showed her displeasure so much as to cease to invite Jack or any of his companions to her house.

This did not break their hearts.

Reports of brigandage continued to come in from all sides.

That the brigands were at work, there could not be any doubt.

Travelers were stopped and plundered, while sometimes a whole village was robbed of provisions.

General Cialdini, who was in command of the troops at Naples, received orders from the Italian Government at Turin, to put a stop to these depredations.

He sent parties of troops to scour the country.

This they did without success.

All the people in the villages could tell him was that the ravages were committed by Barboni.

This Barboni, according to them, was a terrible miscreant, who was in league with the devil.

In their superstitious minds, no bullets could harm him.

Sometimes he took a rich merchant captive, and sent to his friends to say, that if a certain sum of money was not paid within forty-eight hours, they would receive the ears, or the tongue, or the nose of the poor wretch.

And, so sure as there was any failure in paying the ransom, the ears, or the tongue, or the nose came in a basket.

When released by payment, the captives all agreed that they were taken blindfolded some distance and placed in a dungeon.

They were also blindfolded when set at liberty.

No one could describe the place of captivity, or the features of the brigand chief Barboni.

He always wore a black mask, his eyes flashed fire, he had a long beard, and he spoke in a terrible voice.

His men, who were very numerous and well armed, obeyed him blindly.

There was one peculiarity about the accounts of those captured travelers who were lucky enough to be liberated on ransom.

They one and all said that Barboni's lieutenant, who was more cruel and bloodthirsty than his master, had but one arm.

It was impossible to arrange a plan to surprise the brigands, when they agreed to liberate a captive, for this reason:

We will suppose a rich man captured. In the morning his friends receive a letter demanding a certain sum of money, which, if refused, will subject their relative to torture and death.

The money must be brought to a certain spot by one person only.

If any treachery is attempted, the captive will die, and that most cruelly.

When the money is paid, the prisoner is let loose in some unfrequented part of the country, where no one thinks of looking for him, and told to make his way home as best he can.

No precaution that the brigand chief could take was neglected.

Barboni became a name of terror in the vicinity of Naples, for upwards of sixty miles round.

This was especially the case on the northern side, or that of the river Volturno.

General Cialdini offered, in the name of the Government, a reward of six thousand ducats for him, which was about one thousand pounds sterling.

This was to be paid for him, dead or alive.

It was fully three months after Jack's "accident," as it was called, that he was able to pronounce himself well.

The coxswain still went about with his arm in a sling.

He had taken an immense fancy to Jack.

In fact, Harkaway's character was just the sort to captivate the mind of a young and chivalrous youth emerging from his teens.

Jack's exploits while at the university were almost as well known at Cambridge as Oxford.

To the young coxswain Harkaway was a hero of romance.

One day while strolling in the public groves of the public park called the Villa Reale, Walter Campbell said to Jack:

"I'm going to put a fishing question to you."

"Fish away," answered Jack, cheerily.

"Do you like me?"

"Well, I don't care about paying a fellow compliments, but I do like you," said Jack.

"And so do I you," said the little coxswain.

"Now, look here, Harkaway, I am not a rich sort of bloke, like you and Dick Harvey."

"I am not rich," said Jack. "My means are moderate, and I depend on the dear old gov. for my screw. It's Harvey who is the man with the coin."

"Never mind. You are comfortable. Harvey married an immensely rich heiress, didn't he?"

"Yes, a sort of a female Bank of England."

"Perhaps I shall do the same some day; at present I've only a humbugging hundred a year, which my pater allows me."

Jack wondered whether he wanted to borrow a five-note.

He began rather to sink in his opinion.

Men generally begin in this way when they want to borrow.

The young coxswain was as quick as a needle.

He saw the flush come over Jack's face; for Jack was too honest to be able to hide what was passing in his mind.

You could read Jack like a book.

"I don't want to put my hand in your pocket; no fear," said the coxswain. "I'm hurt, Harkaway, that"—

"My dear fellow"—began Jack.

"It's all right," interrupted Walter. "I suppose I've laid myself open to it. I'm such a blundering fool."

"What is he driving at?" thought Jack.

"Look here," said the little coxswain, "I've got a little income settled on myself, and the governor wants me to see something of Continental life."

"Well?"

"Well, I'll give it all to you, if you'll let me stop with you and be your friend until"—

"Until what?" asked Jack, smiling curiously.

"Until you've had your revenge on that brigand cove. I've heard you talking to Harvey and Carden. What friends you three fellows seem to be. I wish you'd let me into your friendship, all of you."

"Have you thought of the danger of the task we have set before ourselves?" asked Jack, becoming grave.

"I don't care for danger; and you said yourself, when we first met, I was plucky, and being a boy of England the brigands will find you are not mistaken."

"I shouldn't like you if you weren't so plucky," said Jack to the young coxswain.

"And you do like me?" asked he.

"Very much," answered Jack.

"By Jove! if you only knew how happy you have made me by saying that," cried Walter Campbell. "It's the dream of my life to join you three fellows and hunt down the brigand chief. Will you let me?"

"Nobody knows who he is, or where he hangs out," said Jack.

He was determined to put as many objections in the young man's way as possible, because the vengeance that Jack had promised himself was not to be easily obtained.

Danger, perhaps death, would bar the way.

"Bother all that," said the little coxswain. "We'll find him. We're bound to do it, man alive, if four such fellows as we are make up our minds."

Jack smiled again.

"You are right in supposing that Carden, and Harvey, and I have made up our minds about this matter," he said, "and we mean to work together; but I cannot agree to take you in until I have spoken to them."

"Will you try for me?"

"Certainly I will."

"Hurrah! it's as good as done, then," said the little coxswain, gleefully. "Won't we warm up the jolly old brigands that's all."

"Don't forget one thing," said Jack; "that is, you must not let a word fall before Emily,

and Hilda. It would only make them ill and nervous. But I mean to stay here until"—

"Look out," interrupted Walter, "here they are."

Jack turned round and perceived Mrs. Harvey and his wife walking together.

"Oh, here you are, Jack dear!" exclaimed Emily. "Monday told me that you left word with him that you had gone to stroll here."

"And so you thought you would follow us?" said Jack.

"I hope there is no harm in that," replied Hilda.

"Not at all. What would the world do without the ladies? But I feel sure of one thing, and that is, you had an object in coming."

"You're a magician, I do believe," replied Hilda. "We did not come to ask you to do us a favor."

"I am sure," said Walter Campbell, "that you have only to ask to receive it."

"Oh, I don't know, Mr. Campbell; husbands are great tyrants," said Emily. "But what we want is a box at the San Carlo tonight."

"I'll go and secure one—the best in the house," said Jack. "What's the attraction?"

"They are going to play a new opera of Verdi's."

"Oh, all right. Consider that done," said Jack.

"Will you come with us?" asked Emily.

"If you will kindly excuse me, I shall be glad," answered Jack, "because I have promised to dine with Carden; but we will all look in at your box after dinner. Won't that do as well?"

"Quite; and now you can continue your stroll. Be good boys," said Emily, with a smile.

The ladies returned to the Strada, while Jack and the coxswain went to the San Carlo theater, where they were lucky enough to secure a box nearly opposite that of General Cialdini.

"They will be well fixed up there," remarked Jack; "and women are never pleased if you put them where no one can see them."

Having arranged this, they went home to dress for dinner, and were told by Monday that the ladies were going to wear their best jewelry, as Ada, Monday's wife, who was Emily's maid, had told him.

Emily's jewelry was not nearly so valuable as that of Hilda, though she had received many handsome presents on her marriage.

Hilda's diamonds were worth twenty thousand pounds at least, to say nothing of pearls and other precious stones; so that when Hilda said that she was going to wear her best jewelry, it meant that she intended to carry about her person what most people would call a fortune.

The ladies were both beautifully dressed, and when they entered the opera-house all eyes were directed towards them.

Never had the San Carlo been more brilliantly and fashionably attended.

The overture was listened to with wrapt attention, and the curtain fell on the first act amidst loud applause.

Verdi himself, the great composer, was present, as were General Cialdini, the contessa, and others of note in the city.

When the curtain fell, Hilda and Emily drew back in order to avoid impudent observation.

Suddenly they heard a slight tapping at the door.

"It is Jack," said Emily, "dear, good fellow; he said he would come early."

She got up to open the door.

Scarcely had she done so when a man in evening dress entered, but as he passed the threshold he put on a black mask.

The girls were too frightened to speak, and sat riveted to their chairs, which were at the further end of the box, and removed from the notice of the visitors to the theater.

It was easy to see anyone in the front of the box, but not at the rear.

"Ladies," said the stranger, with an air of good breeding, which was strangely at variance with the mask. "if you scream, move, or make the least noise, I shall be under the painful necessity of putting you to death with this dagger."

He displayed a stiletto, which flashed before their eyes in the gas light.

"I am a man of my word, though I wish you no harm," he continued, as Hilda made a slight movement.

Emily was so frightened that she fainted away, and fell like a log to the floor.

Hilda seemed scarcely to breathe.

"Give me those jewels you wear, and collect those of your friend, or"—

"What if I refuse?" asked Hilda, her dark eyes flashing fire.

"Simply you will sign your own death warrant. I mean to have them, and if I don't get them from a living body, I shall from a corpse; it's all the same to me," said the mask.

"Who and what are you?" she demanded.

"Shall I answer your questions one by one?" he said.

"Yes."

"First, I am Barboni."

"The brigand!" gasped Hilda, turning ashy pale.

"You have saved me the trouble of replying," he said; "but cospetto, you might have added the compliment of famous, for I have made a stir lately. Come, come, I am an admirer of beauty, yet the time presses; the diamonds, quick."

"Wretch!" exclaimed Hilda. "If you have them at all, you must take them."

He advanced a step and then stood irresolute.

Hilda raised her voice and cried out, but at the same moment the orchestra broke out with a burst of music which completely drowned it.

Seeing his advantage, Barboni grasped her by the wrist, and threw her to the ground.

She fell by the side of Emily, and, like her friend, lost her senses by force of the shock and the fright.

Barboni now lost no time in stripping the two ladies of their jewelry.

This he stowed away in a bag which he seemed to carry for that purpose.

"Per Baccho! this is a prize worth having. It's even better than I expected; my information was correct."

When he had taken everything, he looked at his watch.

"Diavolo!" he exclaimed. "Time flies. I shall be caught red-handed if I linger."

Concealing the bag with its precious load about his person, he carefully removed his mask, let himself out of the box, and, closing the door after him, was soon lost in the many winding galleries in the San Carlo Theatre.

This audacious robbery, the most daring and impudent which the dreaded Barboni had yet committed, had not occupied more than five minutes in its execution.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BIGAMINI.

A SHORT time afterwards Jack and Harvey entered the theater and went to the box where the ladies were.

Carden and the coxswain were promenading on the Chiaja, smoking their cigars, having promised to join them later.

Jack knocked at the door, and was surprised at getting no answer.

He could only suppose that they had not yet arrived, and went in search of the boxkeeper, who opened the door of the *lodge* with a key.

The young men started back in alarm when they beheld their wives stretched on the floor insensible.

Cold water and smelling salts were applied to revive them, and successfully.

The girls, looking deathly pale and shuddering, sat up.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Jack. "You will drive me mad if you do not tell me."

"Oh, Jack," answered Emily, "we have had such a fright."

"From what?"

"A man in a mask came into our box and told us we must give up our jewelry. We must have both fainted, for I remember nothing more."

"Do you recollect, Hilda?" asked Jack.

"Only that the man showed a dagger and threatened to kill me, and then I fainted."

"What was the man like?"

"Tall and thin. The mask hid his face," replied Hilda.

"The villain! Did he say anything?"

"Yes; he said he was Barboni, the chief of the brigands."

"Had you on your diamonds?" inquired Harvey, anxiously.

"Unluckily I had."

"By the living jingo!" cried Harvey, "that fellow has got a splendid booty. Look. He hasn't left them a ring."

"Stay here, Dick," replied Jack. "I will go to Cialdini, the general, who is now in his box, and raise an alarm. The robber may not be out of the theater."

Harvey nodded, and Jack hurried away.

The general readily admitted him to his box, and listened to his tale with evident consternation.

An alarm was given, and all the entrances to the theater watched, while the interior was thoroughly searched.

But no one answering the description of the robber could be found.

He had made off.

The general sympathized very deeply with the ladies upon their heavy loss, and declared it was the most daring outrage that he had ever heard of.

"These brigands," he said, "puzzle me altogether; but both the police and the military shall be set to work immediately. All that I can do shall be done."

"Thank you," replied Jack. "Will you send soldiers to the castle of the Prince Di Villanova?"

"With what end in view?"

"I suspect him to be either the chief of the brigands, or connected with them in some way."

The general smiled incredulously.

"My dear young sir," he replied, "you insult one of the representatives of our old nobility. The idea is ridiculous. I could not insult the prince by suspecting him."

"Then I shall have to do it myself."

"Do what?"

"Expose this fellow, and bring him to justice, if he is what I suppose him to be," said Jack.

"You feel strongly against the man," replied the general, "because you had a quarrel with him, and he shot you in the arm. That's it, eh?"

"Not at all," answered Jack; "of course I don't like him any better for his cowardice."

"No—no," cried Cialdini. "These brigands are common fellows after all, though they are getting very daring, and you must really dismiss from your mind any connection between Barboni and the Prince Di Villanova."

Jack, with disgust, saw that it was useless to try to make any impression upon the general at present.

So, thanking him for his promises and courtsey, he returned to Harvey.

Emily and Hilda recovered themselves; now they had their protectors with them, though they trembled whenever the dreaded name Barboni was mentioned.

Long before the performance was over, it was known all through Naples that Barboni had robbed two English ladies in their box at the San Carlo.

The value of the diamonds amounted to a sum fabulous in the eyes of the Neapolitans.

Nothing else was talked of but this audacious act of brigandage.

Barboni became at once a great man, and as the victims were English, the people did not sympathize much with them.

The Neapolitans are rigid Catholics, and they hate the Protestant Inglesi for being what they term heretics.

On the following day, the walls of the city were covered with huge posters doubling the reward for the capture of Barboni.

Jack, Harvey, and Tom Carden, laid their heads together, to devise a plan by which they could solve the mystery which surrounded the famous brigand.

That the authorities were on the wrong track they did not doubt.

"The key of the riddle," remarked Carden, "lies in establishing the identity of Barboni with the Prince Di Villanova."

"I think so too," replied Jack.

"You know I was the first to start the idea of the prince's being a brigand."

"Yes, you were, and you think the prince and Barboni are one and the same person," observed Harvey.

I wish I was as sure of a thousand pounds as I am of it," answered Tom Carden, confidently.

"The mystery is only to be solved in the prince's castle. What do you call it?" said Jack.

"Castle Inferno. There are some horrible legends connected with it, which accounts for the name."

"I told you that the little coxswain wants to join us," said Jack.

"Yes," replied Harvey and Carden. "Shall we admit him into our fraternity? He is a very decent fellow and as brave as a lion, or he would not have milled me with his arm broken."

"As far as I am concerned I should like him to be one of us," exclaimed Harvey.

"And I also," replied Carden.

"That is settled, then, I will tell him today, and as his arm is quite well, we will admit him, and then we will, in this room, swear, all of us, never to leave Naples until we have exterminated this band of brigands."

This proposal was well received.

The idea of forming a society and binding themselves by a solemn oath was quite romantic.

Jack was sitting near the open window, throwing cigars to a crowd of beggars in the street.

The lazzaroni lazily picked them up, but looked as if they considered it almost too much trouble to do so.

While he was thus occupied, Monday entered.

"Please, sare," he exclaimed, "there is um rum sort of chap down stairs; him want to see you."

"What about?" asked Jack.

"Him not say."

"Show him up."

Presently Monday ushered in an Englishman, about five feet nothing in height, very thin, with a sharp, hatchet-like face, having a comical expression about the mouth and eyes. He appeared to have a nervous affliction, which made him inclined to smile when he had no real intention of doing so.

His dress was shabby and dusty, his boots and clothes belonged to the "have beens," that is, they had been good once, but it was so long ago, that one was tempted to doubt that they ever were new at all.

The continual grin on the man's face was rather amusing, and his sharp grey eyes twinkled like a ferret's.

He looked round nervously, as he glided cautiously into the room, then he peeped under the table, and took the liberty of shaking the curtains to see if any one was behind them.

"Excuse me, sir," he answered in a shrill treble, which was an apology for a voice; it's a way I've got."

"Who are you?" asked Jack.

"I've come from England, sir, and changed my name. Here I'm Bigamini."

"That's a funny name, too."

"So it is, sir. At home I was Smiffins; you won't repeat it, sir."

"No."

"Yes," continued the little man, with a deep sigh, though the smile was all the time visible. "I was once a happy Smiffins."

"And now?"

"Now, sir, I am a miserable Bigamini."

"How did that happen?" inquired Jack, who could not make the fellow out at all.

"I didn't like my wife, sir. She led me such a life, so I—I left her and married another."

"That's bigamy."

"I know it, sir, to my cost. I'm a tailor by trade, sir, and my first wife found me out, and threatened to prosecute me, so I got on board a ship and it brought me here. I was afraid of the police, sir, and that's why I looked under the table and shook the curtains; and as I've always got bigamy on the brain, sir, I called myself Bigamini. It's Italian, sir, and they can't twig it over here."

"The fact of the matter is, I suppose, that you are too lazy to work at your trade, and you have come to beg of me," replied Jack, testily.

"No, sir," said the little man, drawing himself up proudly; a Bigamini—I mean a Smiffins—couldn't so far demean himself as to beg."

"Oh, you don't want money?"

"No, sir."

"That's lucky, for I shouldn't have given you any," replied Jack. "I hate encouraging idleness."

"Begging your pardon, sir," said Bigamini, "I'm in employ as a snip here. Oh, yes, I could always earn good money."

"Well, what in the name of goodness do you want with me," demanded Jack, impatiently.

"You won't betray me to the police, sir?"

"What have the Naples police to do with a charge in England?"

"I always fancy there is a detective after me."

Here the little man took another look under the table.

"My first wife's an awful woman, sir, continued Bigamini. She swore she'd have me some day, and I believe she will; that's what's making me so thin and redooing of me to a shudder."

"I won't split on you. Go on," said Jack.

"Thank you, kindly, Mr. Harkaway, sir; I've heard of you in England, sir."

"The deuce you have?"

"Yes, sir. I ain't a cockneybred and born," said Bigamini. "I was raised in Ifly, near Oxford, and that led me to take an interest in the university boat race."

"Oh, I see," said Jack.

"Yes, sir, I used to bet in Oxford, sir, but that was when I was a happy Smiffins, and now I am a miserable Bigamini."

The little man drew a deep sigh, which shook his feeble frame.

"Yes, Mr. Harkaway, sir, the day you rowed and won. I got on Oxford at threes to one, sir, and pulled off a pot of coin. Ah, well do I remember it, for I got on the spree for a week with the money, and my wife beat me shameful with the carpet-broom when I came back."

"I wish you would postpone your private history and come to the point," said Jack, still more impatiently.

"Don't interrupt him," whispored Carden, nudging Jack's elbow, "he's a gift."

"Yes," said Harvey, in the same tone. "He's a character. I never heard anything so amusing, except old Mole, in my life."

"I'm a-coming by the point, sir," replied Bigamini, "and that reminds me that this is a thirsty place, and when I was a happy Smiffins I used to take my pint regular."

"You shall have some bottle beer when you have told me what you want, and not before."

"Right, sir. You have recalled me to my miserable self. I have heard of your loss, sir, and that of Mr. Harvey's lady. I presoom that is Mr. Harvey?"

"Yes," replied Harvey, "you've made a good shot."

"Thank you kindly, sir. I hope you don't find me forward. I try to be as 'umble as I can in the presence of my superiors."

"I never saw such a fellow," said Jack. "Can't you speak out?"

He began to lose all patience.

"Well, sir, there wasn't a better man of business once than me, though I say it who shouldn't, but that was when I was a happy Smiffins."

He wiped away a tear.

"But now I'm a miserable Bigamini," he continued, in a doleful tone, adding:

"I say, sir?"

"What the d—?"

"Don't swear, sir. It comes 'arsh against the ears to hear a gentleman a-cussin'."

"What is it you want?" asked Jack, in despair.

"Are you quite sure, sir, there ain't no one a-iding under the table?"

Jack groaned in anguish of spirit.

Harvey and Carden laughed and enjoyed the scene immensely.

"I tell you," roared Jack, angrily, "that there is no one in the room but ourselves. 'Can't you understand that, you idiot?'"

"Thank you kindly, sir," replied Bigamini. "It's only my nervous way. I fancy my wife's come over after me with a D. sometimes. I can't bear a detective, sir, and never dreamt of no such thing when I was a happy Smiffins. But now I'm a—"

He began to cough violently.

Jack could not bear it any longer, and, getting up, seized him by the collar and shook him roughly.

"A miserable Bigamini," said the little man, concluding his sentence. "I thank you, sir, for shaking the words out. My cough came on. It does sometimes."

"Do you see that window?" shouted Jack.

"Yes, sir. Pleasing prospect. You can gaze upon the blue waters of the bay."

"Hang the prospect. I'll throw you out of the window if you don't speak."

Anything to oblige you, sir," said Bigamini, shrinking back.

"And stop that infernal grin, will you?"

"Can't sir; that's the effects of bigamy. It makes me feel all-overish. But I came to-day, sir, thinking you'd like to hear something about the brigands."

Tom Carden and Harvey left off laughing.

Jack's face at once displayed a keen interest.

"What do you know about them?" he asked.

"I was captured by them, sir, and kept a prisoner, having only escaped yesterday morning."

"By Jove! you're the very man we want," exclaimed Jack; "and you've come just in the nick of time. Sit down and tell me all you know."

"Yes, sir; but touching that beer?"

"Ring the bell, Dick, for Monday," said Jack.

Bigamini went up to the curtains, and gave them another nervous shake.

Then he glanced timidly at the table, saying.

"You're quite sure there's no one under the table, sir?"

"No, no, it's all right," replied Jack.

Monday brought some beer, which he poured into a silver tankard.

The young men stood around Bigamini and anxiously waited to hear what he had to say.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE SOLEMN OATH.

WHEN Bigamini withdrew his face from the tankard he seemed refreshed and smiled benignantly upon his audience.

"There's nothing like good malt and 'ops," he remarked; "'op picking in Kent's a 'ealthy ockipation, they tell me."

"Never mind that; go on with your story. How were you captured by the brigands?" said Jack.

"I was going to Capua, sir, on a job."

"Yes."

"I crossed the Volturno by the ferry, and hadn't gone far before a lot of fellows in masks came up, knocked me down, bound my arms, and blindfolded me."

"Did you see their faces?"

"Never a one."

"Well, they captured you; what then?" said Carden.

"They wouldn't ha' done it sir, if I'd been happy Smiffins instead of a miserable Bigamini."

"I dare say not. Go on."

"No, sir," replied the little man. "I am what you call crushed now. I'm a kind of worm, and when I'm trod on I don't turn."

"I have always heard that the tailor is only the ninth part of a man," observed Harvey.

"Taint true, sir. You should have seen me when I was a happy—"

"That will do; forge ahead," interrupted Jack.

Bigamini looked suspiciously at the table.

"Ain't it funny?" he said; "I can't get it out of my head that there's some one under that table."

He laughed a low, chuckling sort of laugh.

"Of course," he added, "I know there ain't, but I fancies it."

"What did the brigands do with you?" asked Jack, biting his nails with impatience.

"Ah! the brigands. Yes, sir. What with bigamy and brigands, I ain't the man I used to be."

"Confound you! Will you get on?" cried Jack.

"There's one question I should like to ask, Mr. Harkaway?"

"What is it?"

"I hope you find me 'umble, sir; I don't want to take any liberties with my betters, and it isn't becos you're treating me as a friend, and standing me bottled beer in a foreign country, that I should presoom upon it," said Bigamini.

"You're all right. Go on."

"Where was I?"

"Bound and blindfolded."

"Oh, yes. Well, sir, I was taken over a rough country, as well I could judge, for three miles. Then we crossed a bit of water, went down some steps, and I was put in a dark dungeon."

"Was there no light?"

"Very little; what there was came through a narrow grating. Bread and water was my fare, and the next day a tall man came and asked me if I had friends with money. I told him no. He told me to think it over. Who did I know in Naples? I mentioned my employer, the tailor.

"Write him a letter," he said, "demanding a thousand ducats ransom, and if it is not sent, I shall cut off one of your ears and forward to him—nose to follow, ditto tongue and big toes."

"Pleasant," ejaculated Harvey.

"I didn't think so, sir, and turned sulky," replied Bigamini, "and he left me. During the night, I tried the bars of the window; they were rusty and rotten. I pulled them out, crept through, and fell into the moat."

"How did you know it was a moat?" asked Jack, a little suspiciously.

"Because, when I swam across it and got to the bank, I took a look at the place I had escaped from, and saw by the light of the moon that I had been in a castle."

"Surrounded by water?"

"Yes, sir."

"Whose castle was it?"

"That I did not stop to inquire," answered Bigamini, with a touch of dry humor. "I took to my heels, and run for hours without stopping."

"Fool!" said Jack. "What is the use of your information? Why did you not ask who the castle belonged to?—you must have seen some cottages along the road."

"You see, sir," replied Bigamini. "I didn't like the idea of having one of my ears sent to

Naples, nose to follow, ditto tongue and big toes, which would have been the cost if I had been captured."

"Conld you give us any means of finding the castle?" inquired Carden.

"Yes, I think I could, sir."

"You could guide us to it?"

"I don't say that, for I wouldn't go within a mile of it for the Bank of England, nor ought you, unless you have a regiment of soldiers with you," said the little man.

"I don't want you to tell me what we ought to do. Just answer my questions," said Tom Carden.

"Ain't I a-answering of them?—begging your pardon for being so bold as to say so," replied Bigamini.

"You know the spot where you were captured?"

"Yes, sir; well. It was near the ferry across the river Volturno."

"Very good; the march to the castle, you say, was about three miles."

"Not more, sir."

"There can't be many castles there," said Carden, triumphantly. "And I think this man can give us a clue to the brigands."

"So do I," replied Jack.

"Harvey concurred in this opinion."

"One more question," said Carden, after a moment's pause. "Did you hear any names mentioned while you were with the brigands?"

"Any names?" repeated Bigamini.

He seemed to be taxing his memory.

"Yes, any name?"

"I think I did, sir. There was a man the robbers called Barb-Barbarou. No that wasn't it, though it was Bar something."

"Was it Barboni?" asked Jack.

"That's it, sir. Barboni was the name," cried Bigamini.

The three young men considered the information given them of the utmost importance, as it fixed the locality of the brigand's home.

Jack and his friends now felt certain that they were on the track of Barboni, the brigand chief.

Bigamini had spoken of a castle and a moat, within three miles of the ferry across the Volturno, east of Capua, as the brigand's home.

It was useless for Jack and his friends to go to General Cialdini and tell him what they had heard, for he would scarcely dare to attack a castle without stronger proofs.

So they advised Bigamini to say nothing to any one, and to keep very quiet at his lodgings in Naples, until they had decided how to act. The little man received a couple of pounds for his information, and thanked them all very much for their kindness.

"You can go now," said Jack. "But leave your address so that my servant may know where to find you when you are wanted."

Bigamini wrote it down on a piece of paper.

"That'll find me, sir. It's only a rough sort of a home, on the third floor, facing back," he said. "I ain't got the comforts I had when I was a happy Smiffins."

"Serves us well," replied Jack, "and we will see if we can't arrange things for you in England."

"Never, sir," answered Bigamini, emphatically; "you may square a bobby or even a beak, but my missus—never. I'm doomed to be a miserable Bigamini."

"You needn't be afraid. No one is likely to find you so far away."

"She might. Sarah Ann Smiffins ain't a common sort of woman, and the fear of being took back, and tried for bigamy is almost more than I can stand. Was that the wind, sir, a rustling of them curtains or was it some one behind?"

"The wind," replied Jack, "Now mind what I have said to you. In a day or two you will be sent for."

"Thank you for me, sir. You won't think me forward in asking you to accept the thanks of a miserable Bigamini."

"Not at all."

"That takes a weight off my mind. Good-day, gentlemen," replied the little man.

He took one look under the table, and shuffled to the door, which he opened cautiously, and glided ghost-like down the stairs.

In the street he displayed the same nervous apprehension, and the three friends saw him look over his shoulder several times before he got out of sight.

He had not been long gone before Monday ushered in Walter Campbell.

The little coxswain had his arm out of a sling for the first time.

Slapping Jack on the back, he exclaimed :

"What cheer, my hearty? My wing is mended at last, you see."

"Glad to hear it," answered Jack. "How are you?"

"Nicely, thanks. What's up? You look as grave as a judge on a trial for murder."

"We have received information about the brigands, which give us a pretty good general idea of their whereabouts," said Jack.

"Come, that's news worth having."

"You asked me the other day if you might join us, Walter. Are you still of the same mind?"

"Of course I am. May I?"

"Yes. I have spoken to my friends, and they have no objection to you being added to our number," answered Jack.

The little coxswain threw his cap in the air joyfully.

"Hurrah," he exclaimed. "We will capture the brigands or die in the attempt. Who's afraid?"

"In order," said Jack, "that there may be no flinching or drawing back on the part of any of us, I propose that we bind ourselves by a solemn oath."

"Very proper," observed Carden.

"I mean to have Hilda's jewels back," replied Harvey. "Jack has to avenge the shot in the shoulder, and you, Carden—what is your object?"

"My wish in joining this brigand extermination society," replied Carden, "is a wish to help you two, and a love of adventure."

"And yours, Campbell?"

"Oh, I go for the fun of the thing, and—because I like Harkaway," answered the little coxswain.

Jack took a pen and a piece of paper, with which he occupied himself for a minute or two. Looking up, he said :

"I have sketched the form of an oath. Shall I read it for you?"

"No necessity," answered Carden. "Eh, lads?"

"I think not," replied Harvey. "Let Jack say it out, and we'll say it after him."

"I'm agreeable," said Walter Campbell.

"I, Jack Harkaway, began Jack—" you must put in your own names you know—solemnly swear that I will not rest until I have discovered and either killed or brought to justice Barboni, the chief of the brigands of Naples, and I promise to act loyally and faithfully to the three friends who have associated themselves with me in this enterprise; and this I pledge myself to, by my sworn oath and word of honor, our motto being 'Death to the brigands, wherever they may be, on earth or water.' And I humbly pray for the aid of Heaven in this my sworn enterprise."

"Cross hands," said Tom Carden.

He took Jack's outstretched hand, and Harvey took the little coxswain's across Jack's and Carden's.

In a deep tone each exclaimed :

"I swear!"

Thus was the oath solemnly taken, and they were pledged as men of honor to destroy the brigand chief and break up his gang.

"You all know," said Jack, "that I have been grossly insulted by the Prince of Villanova. First of all through my wife, and secondly by being shot in a cowardly manner."

"Certainly," said Harvey.

"Thirdly," continued Jack, "there is the robbery of the jewelry. We suspect the prince of being the chief of the brigands."

"And we have strong cause for doing so," remarked Carden.

"If I could have met the prince, who has kept out of the way, instead of offering me the satisfaction I had a right to expect, such as a duel with sword or pistols, this crusade might have been avoided," Jack went on.

"As it is," said Harvey, "this course we have adopted is the only one left open to us."

"Yes," said the little coxswain, "we have nothing to be ashamed of, and what we have to do is to go in and win."

"And what's more," said Tom Carden, lighting a fresh cigarette, "we mean to win."

A sound as of mocking laughter was heard in the corridor through the half-open door.

The four young men looked strangely at one another.

"Did you hear that?" asked Jack.

"Yes," answered Harvey. "What the deuce could it be?"

"It sounded like a devil's laugh," said the coxswain.

Jack rushed out on the landing.

"Monday, Monday!" he cried loudly.

The black came running up the stairs.

"Have you seen anyone in the house," asked his master.

"No, sare. Um not see a soul," replied Monday.

At this moment, Emily came from the top of the house in a great state of alarm.

"Oh, dear Jack!" she cried. "Ask Harvey to come upstairs."

"Why?"

"Hilda has been nearly frightened out of her life."

"By whom?"

"The same man in the mask who robbed us at the San Carlo."

"Barboni?"

"Yes, the brigand chief. She was in her bed-room; he walked in and helped himself to her purse and everything of value lying about," replied Emily.

The three young men crowded round Emily, and heard her statement.

Harvey sprang up-stairs at a bound to his wife.

Tom Carden and the little coxswain ran down to the hall to search the house.

"By Jove," said Jack, putting his hands in his pockets, "this is getting serious."

It seemed as if Barboni laughed at locks, defied the law, and mocked every one who stood in his way.

The entrance of a house and robbery by broad daylight was more daring than the outrage at the theater.

Clearly the chief of the brigands was no ordinary man.

The four friends had perhaps set themselves a task more difficult to accomplish than they had imagined.

Barboni was no common thief to be easily captured.

He could plan.

He could dare.

He was able to execute his undertakings with success.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE TEMPTER.

As it was at San Carlo, so it happened at Harkaway's house in the Strada di Toledo.

Not the slightest trace could be found of the robber.

Carden and Campbell rejoined Jack, who was pacing the room in an agitated manner.

"Can't see a soul," said the little Cambridge man.

"Tell you what it is, coxswain," exclaimed Carden, "I don't like that buffer Bigamini."

"Oh, he's right enough," replied Walter Campbell.

"I don't know so much about that. It seems to me that while he was taking an hour to tell what he might have told in five minutes, the house was being robbed."

"You're wrong to suspect him, Tom," said Jack. "He is a harmless fool."

"He may be, but I have my doubts about him," answered Carden.

Harvey having seen his wife and calmed her, came down to the drawing-room.

"We'd better send what valuables we have to the bank after this," remarked Jack.

"Too late, my boy," replied Harvey. "You're like the man who lost his darned fiddle."

"Why?"

"It's locking the stable after the horse has been stolen; we've nothing left."

"Nothing," echoed Jack.

"No; the scamp has made a clean sweep this time, and I should think the things he collared will set him up for life. Neither Emily nor Hilda has any jewelry left," replied Harvey.

"Well, hang my sister's cats!" exclaimed the little coxswain, "we're not going to stand this, are we?"

"Not much," answered Jack, "but we must bide our time. It's no use running your head against a brick wall."

They talked the matter over for some time, and then Jack went to the chief of the police, and afterwards to General Cialdini.

Fresh placards was posted about the city, and the reward for the brigand increased.

The people of Naples laughed.

"When they catch Barboni," they said "the sky will fall and we will catch larks."

"Yes," said others, "we shall lie on our backs, and sucking-pigs, ready roasted, will fall into our mouths."

The Neapolitans were again rather amused than otherwise that the Inglesi should have once more been robbed.

The same day Bigamini made his way very cautiously along the Strada di Toledo, until he arrived at the Palazzo Malafedi.

A servant who seemed to know him ushered him promptly into the presence of the contessa.

"Ha!" she exclaimed. "Is the master in Naples?"

"No, 'celenza,'" replied Bigamini, "but I am the bearer of a message and a letter."

"Proceed" said the contessa, eagerly.

"The master wishes to see you, 'celenza,' to give this letter to Mrs. Harkaway, and he will expect you both this evening at the Grotto of the Sybil."

"It shall be done. The master's will is law. Tell him I kiss his hand," answered the contessa.

Feeling for her purse, she gave the messenger a piece of gold.

Bigamini's nervous manner deserted him while he was with the contessa, and he seemed to be thoroughly self-possessed, and to know what he was about.

He bowed to the ground, and when the contessa dismissed him with a wave of the hand, he expressed his thanks, and retired.

The contessa dressed herself after his departure, and ordered her carriage to drive her to the Villa Reale, where the fashionables of Naples were airing themselves, and displaying their charms and attractive dresses to their acquaintances.

Emily was also there, attended by her maid, Ada, who, as Monday's wife, had accompanied her to Naples.

It was somewhat difficult for the contessa to approach Emily after what occurred at her palace.

In conjunction with most other notables of Naples, she had openly espoused the cause of Prince Villanova.

Since the memorable night when the prince shot Jack in the shoulder, no invitations had been issued to any member of Harkaway's party.

They had been practically cut by the higher classes of society in Naples.

It was rumored that Villanova had been seen at more than one grand house since the affair. But neither Jack nor any of his friends had seen him.

The gay crowd was promenading up and down under the shade of the trees.

In the distance was the serene and beautiful Bay of Naples, reflecting the azure of the fleecy clouds.

Meeting Emily in the grand walk, she stopped, smiled and held out her hand, which Emily took rather coldly.

"Ah!" said the contessa, "how glad I am to meet you again! This is a delight to me which I had not expected. Why have you not been to see me? I feared you were offended."

"Thank you," replied Emily, "but you know I could scarcely come without an invitation, nor should I feel inclined to enjoy your hospitality after what has happened."

"Don't blame the poor prince," said the contessa, in a tone of entreaty. "Our nobles are so proud and so impulsive."

"Rather too much so."

"You are thinking of your husband, but it was nothing, after all. He is well now. The prince might have killed him. See how Mr. Harkaway insulted him by calling him a brigand. The poor prince told him he would hit him on the shoulder. That was all he did. After the insult, it was but a slight chastisement."

Emily shrugged her shoulders and parted her pretty lips disdainfully.

"What would many another have done? Shall I tell you?" continued the contessa.

"If you please," said Emily, in a tone of indifference.

"He would have hired a bravo to kill him with a stiletto, after dark, and no one would have known anything about it, except that an Inglesi had been found dead in the street."

Emily shuddered.

"We don't do things in that way in England," she replied.

"Perhaps not. We are Neapolitans, and so different from you. But say, shall we be friends?"

The contessa spoke in a winning manner.

"I have no particular wish to be on anything but distant terms with you," answered Emily.

"Stupidezz!" replied the contessa, tapping her playfully with her fan.

"No; indeed I have not. While we remain in Naples I have no wish for the society of anyone but those of my own circle."

"Ah; you are resentful. Well, I will not be cross. It is my wish to save you."

"Save me?" repeated Emily.

"Yes. Your husband is very unpopular here. I fear there is a plot against him."

"Of what nature?"

"Will you promise to say nothing to anyone, but to act as I advise you, if I tell you all I know?"

"Oh, yes," said Emily, trembling.

She loved Jack so, and feared so much for his precious life, that she was weak and yielding when she heard that he was in any danger.

"Just now," said the contessa, "a rough-looking man pushed by me, and handing me a letter, told me to give it to Mrs. Harkaway, who is a friend of mine."

"Where is it?" demanded Emily.

"I have it in my pocket, but hear me out. I am concerned in this. The man declared that if any eye but yours saw the letter, both you and I would be in danger of death. Oh, promise me to be cautious. You do not know the power of the dagger in Italy."

"I promise. Give me the letter," said Emily, impatiently.

"No eye save yours shall behold it."

"None."

"Stay, your maid is behind you. Tell her to wait for you on that seat near the statue of Mercury. We can retire under the trees, where we shall be free from observation."

Emily nodded.

She spoke a few words to Ada, who obediently sat down in the spot pointed out, and her mistress walked away with the contessa.

When they reached a shady place, they retired from the throng.

The contessa handed Emily the letter which she had received from Bigamini.

It was written in a delicate Italian hand, and was to the following effect:

"Madame, if you love your husband, whose life is in extreme danger, you will meet the writer of this note as soon as possible in the Grotto of the Sybil. I pledge my word you shall run no risk."

That was all.

"What can this mean?" asked Emily.

The contessa took the note from her hands, which shook with emotion.

"It is in English," she said, "though written by an Italian. Depend upon it it is meant as a warning."

"Against what and whom?"

"How can we guess unless we go?"

"We!" said Emily.

"Yes, my child, I will incur any danger for your sake. It will show you that you have mistaken my character, and though I sympathize with my countrymen, I yet have affection for you."

Emily was deceived by the manner of the contessa.

"Dear friend," she exclaimed, "I will put my trust in you. What shall I do?"

"Keep this appointment. You will then know the full extent of the danger."

"But should it be a trap?"

"Oh! you can trust to the honor of the Neapolitan. The letter expressly says, 'you shall run no risk,'" said the contessa.

"Where is this grotto?"

"Not far from Naples, scarcely ten miles. In it resides an aged sorceress, who can pry into the secrets of the future. She is called the Cumæan Sybil, and many people of high rank go to consult her. I have been myself."

"May I not tell my husband?"

"Certainly not; that would spoil it all," said the contessa. "Send your maid home. Tell her you are going to my house, and I will drive you in my carriage, without delay, to the Grotto of the Sybil."

"I never had a secret from Jack," sighed Emily.

"That don't matter," the contessa urged; "We shall be home in three hours. It is now four; you don't dine till eight. No one dines till the heat has passed."

"It must be as you say, though I have had misgivings."

"Am I not with you?"

"Yes, that comforts me."

"Besides, your maid will be able to say you are with me, if questioned. Surely the Contessa Di Malafedi should be a fit companion for Mrs. Harkaway."

This was said with some pride, and Emily, seeing the point and admitting it, made no further opposition.

She lent on the contessa's arm, and they sought the maid, who had followed them with her eyes.

"Ada," said Emily, "you will go home, please, and if I am inquired for, say I have gone for a drive with the contessa."

"Say nothing, girl, unless you are asked," said the contessa.

The two ladies passed on, but as Emily sought to put the letter, which she held in her hand, into her pocket, she was so nervous that she let it drop on the path without perceiving it.

Ada, however, saw it.

She darted forward in an instant, and picking it up, held it tightly.

"It's odd, mistress going off with the contessa," she murmured. "Perhaps the letter will throw some light on it. I will show it to Monday, and if he thinks there is anything wrong, we shall give it to master."

Utterly unconscious of having dropped the letter, Emily accompanied the Contessa Di Malafedi to the entrance of Villa Reale.

There the contessa's carriage was waiting.

They entered, and the Malafedi said in Italian to her footman:

"Drive to the Sybil's Cave. Go slowly through the streets, but outside Naples increase your pace. I am impatient. You understand?"

"Si, 'celenza," replied the man, who mounted the box, and the carriage drove off.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE CAVE OF THE SYBIL.

The Cumæan Sybil, as she was called, was a fortune-teller of considerable reputation.

She lived in a cave or grotto, which she never quitted, and subsisted on the sums of money she received from those who came to consult her.

Her only attendant was a dwarf, named Bomba, who was as much like the popular idea of an imp of darkness as he could be.

Misshapen, ungainly, hideous, cruel and mischievous, Bomba was supposed by the ignorant to be the familiar spirit of the witch.

As the carriage neared the cave, the dwarf, who was perched on a rock like a toad on the edge of a precipice, jumped from crag to crag with incredible rapidity, and gaining the ground ran into the cavern.

He had evidently been on the watch.

The cave of the sybil was situated at the extremity of a narrow rocky defile, the sides of which were covered with stunted shrubs, pine trees, and long grass.

This defile was capable of being defended by a handful of men against an army.

A small entrance admitted the visitor to a spacious cavern dimly lighted from a fissure in the rock.

By the imperfect light could be seen the arrangements of the interior.

Ghastly skeletons from Pompeii, horrid mummies from the East, grinned from the sides, where they had been placed, piles of bones were seen in the corners, hideous bats were nailed to the roof, and strange animals, stuffed, seemed prepared to spring upon the intruder.

A brood of tame snakes crawled over the floor, gliding into holes, reappearing in other parts, and keeping up a constant hissing.

On a ledge sat an owl, while at the old hag's feet lay a savage wolf, who had for his mistress the fidelity of a dog.

The sybil herself was an aged crone, with bent back and wrinkled face.

She wore a short black serge skirt, and over her shoulders was thrown a blood-red cloak, while her gray and tangled hair hung in matted ringlets down her back.

In spite of age and growing infirmities, there was a fire in her eyes which showed that her mind was active enough.

When Bomba bounded into the cave, he exclaimed:

"They come."

"Go, child," replied the sybil, "and guide them to me. Stay! Is the curtain securely drawn round the entrance to the secret cavern?"

"Yes, mother," answered the dwarf.

"Then all is well. Let them approach."

From this conversation it will be seen that the visit of the contessa and Emily was not unexpected by the witch and her goblin attendant.

A moment afterwards the carriage had drawn up at the end of the defile, and in front of the rock, and at the base of which the sybil had her home.

"Is this our destination?" asked Emily, regarding the gloomy-looking place with an involuntary shudder.

"Yes; lean on my arm. You tremble, *mia cara*," replied the contessa, in a reassuring tone.

Together they passed through the narrow aperture and entered the cave.

The snakes crept about hissing, and raised their spiral coils defiantly.

The owl flapped its wings, the wolf's back bristled as it bared its glistening teeth.

The skeletons seemed to rattle their bones, and even the mummies appeared to gibe and mock the visitors to the gloomy abode of witchcraft.

Bomba, having indicated the way to the ladies, retired to the doorway, and again posted himself on the lookout.

"What would you with me?" asked the witch.

"Give her the letter," said the contessa, in a whisper.

Emily searched her pockets for it, but in vain.

"I have lost it," she answered. "Perhaps it is in the carriage."

"No matter," said the contessa, "I will speak to her. Have you no one here, mother, who expects an English lady?"

There was a slight rustling at the darkest portion of the cave.

A curtain veiling an aperture was thrown aside, and a tall man stepped forth.

"I will answer that question in person," he exclaimed.

When he came into the light, his features remained unseen, owing to a black mask which concealed the upper part of his face.

"Barboni!" exclaimed Emily, uttering a cry of terror.

"The same," he replied. "We have met but once, and that under unpleasant circumstances, and yet you do me the honor to remember me."

"What is the meaning of this?" cried Emily. "Have you dared to bring me here under the false pretence that my husband is in danger?"

"I stated nothing but the truth," replied the bandit, boldly. "Your husband has sworn, in conjunction with three companions, that he will capture me or die."

"Ha! has he sworn that?"

"My information may be relied upon. Now, I wish you to tell Mr. Harkaway that his insane determination must end in death for him and his friends."

"I will try to dissuade him," said Emily.

"He under-rates my power and my resources; he thinks me a simple robber, when I am a chief. Follow me, lady, to the outside of this cave."

"For what reason?" asked Emily, who feared some foul play was intended her.

"Nay, you have nothing to fear," said Barboni. "In my letter I pledged my word you should be free to come and go as you pleased."

Emily followed to the outside.

"Look, lady," continued the bandit, "you behold the two sides of the ravine?"

"I do," she answered.

"What do you see?"

"Nothing but stunted shrubs, black-looking pines, and tall reed-like grass."

The bandit smiled significantly.

His lips parted, and from them came that weird, wild, mysterious whistle, so piercing and so shrill, to which we have had occasion to allude before.

In a moment, as if by magic, both sides of the ravine were alive with men, attired in the picturesque costume of the brigands.

Their rifles were displayed, and in their belts were to be seen knives and pistols.

The feathers in their hats waved in the wind, but they neither moved nor spoke, standing like machines, awaiting the word of command.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Barboni, "am I to be despised, signora, when I can make men spring out of the earth like that?"

"Madre di Dio! what would an army be against my fellows, posted as they are now?"

"Perhaps you are right," answered Emily. "It may be that Jack is no fit match for you; but why cannot you let him alone?"

"It is he who will not permit me. I am willing to allow him to leave Naples, if he will do so at once."

"No, he will not do that," replied Emily, with a shake of the head. "You don't know my husband. If he says he will do a thing, no power on earth can turn him from his purpose."

"Not even your influence?"

"Not even mine."

"That's a pity. It will be best for him to go. What can four young men effect against me?" said the brigand.

"Perhaps more than you think," replied Emily. "But I am deeply grieved to hear that my husband has sworn to kill you, though"—

She hesitated.

"Speak fearlessly, lady," said Barboni.

"Though I am sure he will keep his word, in spite of your power," she concluded, becoming bolder, as her first alarm passed off.

"Santa Maria!" cried the brigand, angrily. "Am I to be frightened by four boys, whose beards have scarce begun to grow? You are deceived in your husband. He is neither so brave nor so faithful as you imagine."

"For shame!" exclaimed Emily. "You would not dare to abuse him before his face as you do behind his back."

"Come to the sybil," said Barboni; she cannot lie. Let us consult her art."

"For what purpose?"

"She will tell you that you are deceived."

"In what way?"

"Mr. Harkaway loves another woman. You shall hear it from the lips of the sybil."

"I do not believe her!" cried Emily.

She drew her breath in quick, short gasps, more from indignation at the shameful accusation, than because her jealousy was excited.

She had too much faith in Jack to listen to such idle stories.

"Then you shall read it in the crystal globe," said Barboni. "Come, come!"

Again he uttered his peculiar whistle, and the brigands sank back into concealment, as magically as they had risen from it.

As if by enchantment they vanished, and not a rifle, not a feather, not a form was to be seen on the rocky sides, which a moment before had been alive with them.

"Come to the sybil, come!" cried the brigand, taking her by the hand.

He led her unwillingly into the cave, and spoke a few words rapidly in Italian to the aged crone.

The sybil rose from the rock on which she had been sitting and approached a small and roughly-made table, upon which reposed a large globe of crystal.

"Look steadily at this," she said, "and you will behold your husband as he is engaged at this minute."

Emily bent her gaze curiously, but doubtfully, upon the surface of the shining crystal.

For some time she saw nothing.

At length two figures appeared before her eyes.

One was Jack, the other that of a dark-haired, beautiful woman, to whom he was talking earnestly.

She uttered a cry, and started back.

"Are you satisfied?" said Barboni, in an exulting voice.

There is some jugglery in this," she replied.

"As you please. I will undertake, in a short time, to show you the reality. Will you believe then?"

"What I see with my own eyes, in flesh and blood, I will believe, and nothing else," she answered.

"So be it."

There was a momentary pause.

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